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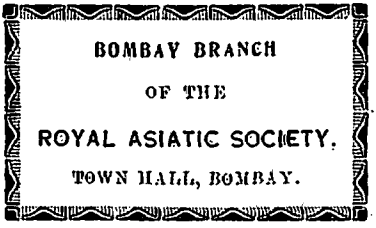

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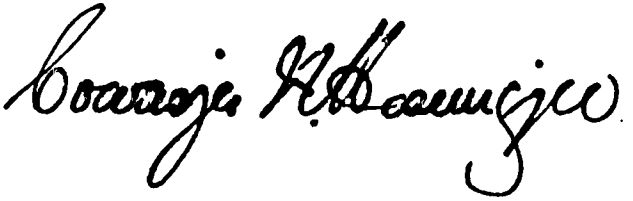

GOVERNMENT HOUSE CALCUTTA, FROM THE TOP OF SPENCE'S HOTEL.

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From

Southampton to Calcutta.

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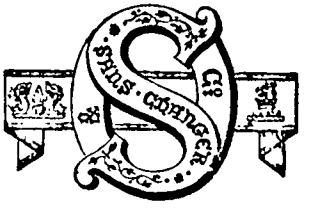
By

CADWALLADAR CUMMERBUND.



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PREFACE.

BRITISH India, as far as literature is concerned, is well-trodden ground; Calcutta, its capital, more so than any other part. But as no two human countenances are exactly alike, so are no two minds, and thus individual impressions will never be found to vary. This being my conviction, I offer no apology for rushing into print, but submit my volume to the public with the hope that it will tend to kill an idle hour, and afford some amusement by perusal, though failing to prove instructive.

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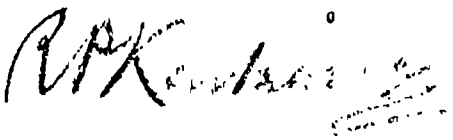

From Southampton to Calcutta.

CHAPTER I.

Embark on board steamer—Who I saw there, and what they were like—Great Guns—Parting demonstrations—Go a-head—Stomach's power over mirth and sorrow—English reserve—Bed soliloquy—Moral breaking of the Seventh Commandment—A Yankee ship fallen foul of—Deaths—Sabbath day labour—Power of cheroots and cards to bring about acquaintanceship—Average state of the human thermometer—Foreigner's partialities—The ladies and their predilections—Mrs. Z and another lady—A sensitive double first-class man—Internal economy of steam-boat—How Jack is housed—Cooking shop revelations—Concluding reflections.

ON a certain December morning, in the year of Grace, '58, it rained no end of drizzle, as an un-

usual number of individuals, with packages and carpet bags encumbered, wended their way from Radley's Hotel, towards the Southampton Docks; thence to embark in the P. and O. Company's steamer, C——.

The heavy baggage had preceded them, and beyond wading through mud, ankle deep, and jostling a crowd of sailors gathered near the gates of that impure locality, there was nothing to create anxiety in the most nervous.

A long, sloping, slippery plank, whose vibrations but for an adjoining bannister, would have sadly disturbed one's equilibrium, gave admission to the giant vessel, on reaching which, as the rain showed no sign of abatement, the writer of this sought shelter in the vicinity of the Binnacle, where stood an attenuated gentleman in black, holding spasmodic converse with a fellow-passenger—his very antipodes in personal appearance. The ruby-tipped nose of the first waived the necessity of an introduction

to his propensities, and those of the second oozed out when he informed us—quite gratuitously—that he was a colonel close on his major-generalship, which illustrious rank, however, proved under present circumstances rather a bore than otherwise, as it might necessitate his taking charge of the cadets, young gentlemen whose exuberance of spirits and frolicsome propensities, often sadly perplex valetudinarian field officers.

But our great guns from that day forth, until the Hooghly should disgorge them, were to be the gallant defender of Lucknow and his lady;—they did not arrive till the vessel had been some time in the open water, and a little steamer, laden with mail boxes of every hue and colour, brought them alongside, her departure from the shore being announced to us by a battery salute.

The excitement created in England by the heroic defence of Lucknow had not yet subsided, and it was therefore with no small curiosity I

looked for the arrival of the lion of the day. On a little silvery-headed man, in profile the fac simile of His Grace Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington, I at first fixed the *sacras lauras*, but he turned out to be only the mail agent. Sir John in appearance seemed scarcely to have reached middle age, and was the proprietor of very enviable whiskers.

A deal of crying, hard shaking of hands, the floating of white pocket handkerchiefs, and other affecting demonstrations, filled up the space of five minutes, after which, "go ahead" sounded from the strong lungs of Captain E——, and our graceful craft, as though her iron sides comprehended the voice, dashed through Southampton's waters in one direction, the tiny mail boat in the other.

The sorrowful and the gay have stomachs, and stomachs are vulnerable: you may fail to reason the first into resignation, or convince the second that mirth has limits, but stop the supplies for a given period, and men, like the

lower animals, become wonderfully docile. The sound of bugle No. 1, like lightning after a hot day, harmonised the atmosphere. Tears were dried and broad jokes bottled, that each mortal might secure a plate. A card laid therein was as good as a sentinel, and warned away intruders, so that when bugle No. 2 swelled on the tympanum, every one dropped into his seat as though he had occupied it since the deluge; but, "though plenty crowned the board, though rank that day was shored, and each feasted like a lord," the dinner was English to the core, that is, heavy and conversationless; each man trying to guess who his flank supports and *vis-à-vis* might be, but never endeavouring to elicit it by conversation.

Oh! England, England! represented in that community of poultry masticators, how many a heart was yearning for a smile of fellowship or a word of pleasantry to break the crust of ice that would have thawed to the smallest sunbeam. Bah! what business have *I* to lecture?

did I not purse up *my* mouth, and revolve all sorts of difficulties during that glutinous process of half an hour? And so it is with all us "true born Britons," we think too much; and until a dozen glasses of sherry have played Old Harry with our intellects, and given a suspicious lustre to our visual organs, we are as dull as ditch water.

Ye who dwell in narrow houses and drink small beer, murmur not that the Fates have so ordained it. Thus I soliloquised, as a leap seven feet from the deck deposited me, somewhat exposed in person and crumpled about the shirt, in a crib no bigger than a coffin. Beneath me snored a gallant artillery officer, of whom more anon, and at right angles to him, but in the same allotted space, lay the graceful proportions of a light infantry man; one overpowered by Eau de vie, the other by Eau du sel. As I gazed on them from my elevated position, and then at the dim lump swinging in its socket parallel with my right eye; as I noticed the

little washstand in the corner, whose solitary basin, with brass plug attached, would witness so many ablutions next morning, and then measured with a mental thermometer, the heat of my narrow dormitory, I repented me of past murmurings, and repenting, fell asleep, to dream (it may not have been all a dream though) that a private soldier, near our cabin door, was *morally* breaking the seventh commandment, inasmuch as he did audibly confess to a *Damigello semplice* his abhorrence of certain conjugal bonds, that prevented him tying the nuptial knot in a quarter more congenial to his taste, the said *Damigello* not angering thereat, but in dulcet tones declaring "her would have made a very proper wife," and condoling with him to the full over the stringency of laws that forbade it.

Cr-a-sh! bump, bump, *crash!* "Hard-a-port!" What the devil! Screams, roars, cries of "Save me! save me!" and a hundred other confused sounds and movements, sent passengers

flying on deck without the smallest regard to their nether garments. A pretty prospect, truly, for one o'clock in the morning, and intense darkness over the face of the deep—a charming commencement to an ocean trip in the very pleasant and cheering month of December. We had dashed at the speed of twelve knots an hour right into an American ship, slicing away her port quarter to within a few feet of the sea's surface, and carrying away our bowsprit in the collision, together with a figure-head certainly not the conception of a Chantry. The sun rose before order again got the upper hand of chaos, and we then learned a mate and seaman, belonging to the American, had perished, but in what manner none could tell.

> "Oh! mother, praying God will save
> Thy sailor—while thy head is bowed,
> His heavy shotted hammock shroud
> Sinks in its vast and wandering grave."

It happened on a Sunday, and while you, my countrymen, were, if sound churchmen, intoning

the Liturgy, or singing, may be, the hundredth psalm, old version, the C——'s people (with two orthodox Divines on board) busily employed themselves carrying hawsers to the crippled ship, which, as they parted one after the other, were again and again towed back by the steamer's boats; yet both of us, I trust, were doing our duty, for prayer without good works is a humbug and a sham, and works without prayer a groping in the dark. "*Dux nobis et auctor opus est.*" We saw her safe into Portland Roads, and then, with damaged proboscis, but lightened hearts, pursued our solitary way.

Cheroots, if bad for digestion, promote good fellowship; cards, chess, &c. may attenuate one's pockets, but nourish the thinking organs; influenced by these, the John Bull community began to fraternize, their veins were found to contain not entirely frozen water after all; tepid liquid, even in the eyes of Frenchmen (we had several on board), was the coldest term applicable to their sanguineous properties. Brown,

before long, discovered in Tomkins a congenial spirit, and paced the deck with him for hours together. Jennings and Junius Brutus, oddly enough, had matriculated at the same college, and both going out for the covenanted Civil Service, were of course equals, and need not be ashamed to avow each other friends; nay, even Miles Brobdignag, cornet in Her Majesty's 14th Light Dragoons, so far forgot his lofty rank and distinguished profession, as to ask Baker, an attorney's clerk, one very dark night, for a light to his cigar, and tendered him a first-rate Cuba in consideration of having obtained the same; courtesies, stiff and formal enough before breakfast, became, at the conclusion of each dinner hour, exceedingly natural and unstudied, and by nine, p.m., under the warming influence of Hollands, whiskey, and French pale, often degenerated into downright, hearty, devil-may-care conversation: just as the sun goes from east to west, or rather, as we mortals travel the other way, so was the social periphrasis.

Average state of the human thermometer on board the P. and O. Company's steamer, C——, from December to January:

. Morning, cold.

. Noon (grog time), thawing.

After dinner, gentlemanly.

Nine at night, extremely cordial.

Our foreigners, in the mean time, partial to a more equable temperament, formed a society of themselves, and with that confidence peculiar to the Gallic race, favoured us, every alternate night of the voyage, with a vocal concert. If harmony, on these occasions, was not the prevailing feature of the entertainment, the intention lay certainly in that direction, and I bear record that the want of it, in one sense at least, did not lie at their door.

The ladies, when their constitutions had grown reconciled to Father Neptune's treatment, emerged by twos and threes from their hiding-places, till the saloon became tolerably

well stocked with crinoline and beauty: they, of course, showed no predilections or dislikes! social rank and military trappings were never known to dazzle the eyes of the fair sex! Had the Archbishop of Canterbury and a few other high church dignitaries been on board, the dear, unsophisticated creatures would have given way to their natural propensities by proposing Scripture readings twice a week, and wearing the plainest of bonnets; but the Archbishop was absent, and so they bowed to circumstances, and prayed, it is to be hoped, on Sundays.

Mrs. Z—— never turned up *her* nose and looked another way when assistant-surgeon Candy, of the Madras establishment — her *vis-à-vis* at table—sneakingly endeavoured to ingratiate himself by offering her the nut crackers! neither did she receive with the blandest of smiles, as hath been libellously asserted, an orange or a golden pippin, when peeled for her by the gray and gallant General Parchmentskin! and though one of the stewards

had the bare-faced impudence to assert that another highly honourable lady declined sitting at the saloon table, for fear she might come in contact with a retired tailor, I pronounce it to be a malicious fabrication, quite irreconcilable with gentle breeding; on the contrary, so unmistakably affable were some of the softer sex, that an acutely sensitive, double first-class man, fearful of committing himself by an attachment too early in life, persuaded a heavy mustached Swiss to change places with him, whose profound ignorance of the British vernacular precluded all possibility of a similar catastrophe in his case, and who, with the most innocent intentions, no doubt, sent the lady unmistakably to Coventry.

Let us bid farewell to human bipeds for a time, and cast our eyes over the wonderful ship that can "feed sumptuously every day" one hundred and fifty stomachs, and satisfy twice as many more, and which is destined to carry to and fro, we trust, many a wayfarer, before her

hull be made over to the blacksmith and the timber chopper.

On either side the forecastle and upper main deck, stand (with few interruptions) a range of spacious coops, filled with ducks, fowls, geese, turkeys, and peahens, wedged closely together, and struggling like urchins in a game of scramble, when "Jemmy Ducks" goes round with grain. Egad! what feathers are ruffled, what backs trodden upon, what necks twisted into lattice work, when that eventful time arrives! it is a struggle for sustenance, and (as with species of a higher order) selfishness is the ruling passion when scarcity predominates.

"Tough customers among your poultry, Jim?"

"Why you see, sir, 'tan't so much the fault of the birds, as the eatin' of 'em out o' season; folks aboard ship are obligated for to take what she'll stow, and Michaelmas geese and Spring chickens won't allus keep vardant till 'ems wanted."

"Exactly so; nor will the poulterer be so

verdant as to part with them, when he has a plentiful supply on hand of old stagers, that none but ship caterers will look at."

In a large square box, fitted with bars on one side, and standing near the chesstrees, repose a score or two of pigs, recently weaned, if we may judge from their size; the snouts of the little animals lovingly laid on each other's necks and bellies, their legs straightened out, or tucked under them, in the most cosy way imaginable, and low, short grunts, just audible, testifying to the happy state of their mental cogitations; and adjacent to them, but nearer still to the fore-peak, may be seen a wooden dormitory, wherein are two cows, pensively gazing on the patent windlass in front of them, and wondering, may be, at the absence of verdure in the novel locality by which they are surrounded.

But where are the sheep?

We ducked our heads, and peered into a low, dim, unpleasant-smelling compartment, without at first discovering anything; but as our eyes be-

came guadually familiarised to the obscurity, the hazy outlines of suspended hammocks, then the proportions of a table or two, and finally, the grisly countenances of sundry human beings daguerreotyped themselves upon our startled eyeballs.

Poor Jack! reform has not yet penetrated *your* abodes; and model lodgings afloat is an original conception of mine, which, if philanthropists appropriate and improve upon, will entitle them to the monopolies of a patent, as it is not my intention to take one out. Sheep, indeed! they have much more air and light, and are standing, at this moment, a foot or more apart, patient, as sheep always are, and fully prepared, when their time shall come—they are well stricken in years already—to go like lambs to the slaughter.

"And now for the cooking shop, if you please."

There it stands, close before the engine shed, flanked with stoves that give out a heat power-

ful as an eruption of Vesuvius. Oh! what a phalanx of pastry-adorned dishes, ready for the oven; what a seething of pots; what a sweltering of flower-besmeared men, in white caps, contains that important locality! Rolls, more than enough to satisfy the cravings of a whole parish of paupers; vegetables, one half of which will invigorate the pigs, are there; trussed poultry, rolled fillets, joints, Noah-arkian in variety, meet the eye at every turn. Ye Gods! what murder is committed, that men may live! Oh! human nature, how inhuman thy requirements!

Drop that strain if you please, you who are as fond of the flesh of sheep and of oxen as any man; who have shot down game without even a license, and hunted the kangaroo to death for his tail.

Ah, reader! it is not in human nature to be consistent. How few of us are guiltless of the faults we descry! how many of us undeserving of the praises which we accumulate!

Nevertheless, and "for a' that," the clerical admonition, "do as I tell you, not as I do," is substantially sound. Because Miss Kissingfond's mamma made a little slip once, only once, in *her* juvenile days, is that a reason why her giddy-brained daughter should do so likewise? or that the experienced old lady, overflowing with maternal solicitude and repentant philosophy, ought not to do her best to prevent the stream that nearly drowned herself from engulphing her offspring?

"He jests at scars, who never felt a wound."

And a convicted housebreaker, in my opinion, giving a homily on the sin of appropriating another man's goods, is more worthy of respectful attention, than your pippin-faced innocent, who never stuck so much as a pin in a cushion not his own. As a blister is to the wound beneath it, so is the experience of a veteran to the ignorance of an unfledged soldier.

CHAPTER II.

The Bay of Biscay outwitted—Cape St. Vincent—Reflections on old salts and modern heroes—Tarefa—Arrival at Gibraltar—Captain's anxiety about his "nose"—A passenger's description of Gibraltar—Departure from ditto—The Sabbath bell afloat and at home—Prayers in the saloon—A sermon and Hudibras—Chat on pulpit craft—Reach Malta—Comparisons between Cape and Mediterranean route—Reflections produced by a sea-bird—Malta boats—Ditto perambulations—Church of St. John—Hush! tread softly—Catacombs—The armoury—Cheap dog—Effects of steamer coaling—An ill wind that blows nobody good—Departure from Malta—Gallant artillery officer—The thermometer and Mr. Grubbus—Purser's logic.

THAT provoking span of water, the Bay of Biscay, is, thanks to the energetic P. and O. Company, no longer the great bugbear of unmaritime British stomachs. Boisterous as of yore it is, no doubt, and as little disposed as ever to do the civil, but its surly and pugnacious waves

can no longer play pitch and toss with us for weeks together, as was the case under the old *régime*. We bid them defiance now; we say, roar on and burst your billows, we have but a short time to see the fun—a more powerful element has taken us under its protection, and vain are your endeavours to detain us. So, like men who on the top of a stage-coach bear complacently with incivilities hurled at them from the lungs of a passing waggoner, we throw up half a dozen meals or so, with small compunction, knowing they are all the Bay can get out of us.

By the 8th of December, we had sighted Cape St. Vincent, and were leaning over the gunwale with levelled glasses to gaze upon the brown, bold, rugged coast of Portugal, distant from us about two miles, with Sagras Fort and the convent north of it, crowning the heights; the latter no longer tenanted by pious nuns but converted into a lighthouse station.

The sea dashed furiously against the cliffs,

and Sagras looked scowlingly down on the only point where a landing was practicable; but neither Sagras nor the surf had much to do with my thoughts just then; they were wandering back to the times of Jervis and Nelson, and picturing men-of-war, at which we now turn up our noses, hammering away tooth and nail, for the honour of Old England, and the humiliation of her enemies. Oh, the glorious "*salts*" of those eventful days! a medal was then indeed a thing to be proud of, rare as a Golconda gem, and where bestowed, evidence of the possessor having fought with a vengeance; but now-a-days, three popguns, fired by half naked savages on a British warrior, entitle him to a *brevet* and a *clasp*, and C. B. ships are awarded for rowing past a Lilliputian battery under shelter of a hayrick! Ehu! and oh be joyful! if the Millennium is not yet reached, we are fast drifting towards it; phrenological development varies no longer —all-pervading is the bump of self-esteem.

"Away, away—St Vincent's gone,
Right rapidly we hurry on;"
Three hours it wants to break of day,
And there's Tarefa—hip! hooray!

But Tarefa is only a lighthouse seen on the way to Gibraltar. Gibraltar itself we entered between dark and dawn on the 10th, its steep and rugged rock looking awfully threatening at that gloomy hour. For all that has been said of this Mediterranean stronghold, St. Helena in my opinion beats it out and out; the height of the first does not exceed 1,400 feet, whereas Diana's Peak stands 2,692 feet above the level of the sea.

Our captain, anxious to conceal "the loss of his nose," as he termed our bowsprit's disappearance, would not drop anchor, but hailing the hulk, requested the mails might be forwarded with all speed, so we saw nothing of the famed galleries, obtained but an indistinct peep at St. Rocque, Algeseiras, and one or two other milk-coloured towns through their drapery of morning mist, and gleaned the rest of

our information from an officer who had been quartered seven years in the place—which was in effect, that the British water extended one mile and a-half, and the Spanish, ditto—the intermediate space being neutral of course. Furthermore, that the Spaniards were devils for taking bribes, a major in the army of that illustrious nation having accepted no less than two shillings from his, our informant's, own man-servant, on one occasion, to enable him to smuggle provisions for a pic-nic party —into what particular locality deponent stated not.

"Whif—piff, piff—whif," from the steamer's funnel, then an infernal vibration through the whole ship, not unlike galvanism operating upon a human backbone, and Gibraltar was left for the next mail-boat to criticise and explore, if so be her proboscis remained intact, and no other obstacles intervened.

Hark! the Sabbath bell is tolling, and a pleasant toll too, though not so cheering as the

chimes from a country parish church, when the sun glints on meadows gorgeous with spring flowers, and a river murmurs and meanders through the landscape we are traversing, and pretty girls in dainty array, under mushroom parasols, cast sidelong glances at us as we pass, the Damons who keep them company (rustics, of course) looking awkward the while in their quaint-cut black coats, and hats of rebellious beaver.

Oh, dear Old England! dearer still country simplicity, we can appreciate you to-day: our solitary bell does not discourse sweet music—the surrounding waters rather disturb than aid our pious cogitations, and the only flowers visible are painted ones, glaring from the panelling of the C——'s saloon; but better these than nothing—so we take our seats round the long, narrow tables, a cushion and some red bunting make a tolerable reading desk, and the clergyman in white surplice arrayed, holds forth, and—holds on; for the centre of gravity in a

rolling ship is difficult to determine, and moral gravity not always maintainable, when we see a man cutting involuntary capers, especially a divine.

A sermon, in which there was little eloquence and less reason, but a large amount of poetry, succeeded the prayers, Byron, Crabbe, and Shakespeare each figuring in turn—a piece of heterodoxy on the preacher's part, which in some measure extenuated, though it could not justify, the proceedings of an incipient ensign, who, having no Prayer Book available, did in the early part of the service, with intent best known to himself, turn over the leaves of, and look into, a pocket volume of Hudibras, to the great endangerment of his risible muscles and those of a gentleman desirous of learning the Collect, who glancing over the ensign's shoulder with that intent, discovered the fraud, and was greatly shocked thereat.

And now for a little chat upon pulpit craft. Whence arise its soporific properties? How do

we account for an audience (*unus et totus*) keeping wide awake through the dullest lecture when delivered at a Mechanics' Institute, and going soundly to sleep, at least a third of them, five minutes after the delivery of a text? Is it that gazing on a black gown promotes drowsiness, as darkness does in infants? Certainly not; for our professor at the "Mechanics'" is ebon clad from his boots upwards. Spurgeon has partly solved the mystery; he has shown that the lineal descendants of St. Peter are too tenacious of the proprieties, that dramatic effect is by them accounted rank blasphemy, and tropes and figures, unless culled from the pages of Holy Writ, a crime only second to manslaughter, so, meeting from infancy to manhood with but one style of pulpit oratory, we laymen grow dyspeptic from repletion, and fall asleep, like middle-aged gentlemen after dinner.

A poem from Byron, a novel of Bulwer's, read for the first time, startle us into enthusiasm; but take them up a week after, with the

settled determination not to skip a line, and if you never yawn during the process, I am a libeller of priesthood, and deserve excommunication. When will individual churchmen be permitted to think for themselves in this department of their calling, and live scathless of bishops, though at war with the canons? But I must bring up, or my enemies may say, "*Avarizia è la genitore della cresia:*"—he is obnoxious to church rates.

Five times have I rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and the stormy "Horn" is not a stranger to me; but, ah! what galling endurance, what absence of novelty, what a "sound of the everlasting sea" those voyages bring to mind, as we dash, nine days after leaving England, into Malta's placid harbour! Cast your eyes down the map, and you will see we are but four degrees, or thereabout, to the westward of the African Cape, which, if reached by sailing ships in two months, is not considered bad work; and *then* what a waste of water still lies before us to

be traversed! but though science has done much she has yet to "bridge the Universe, and put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes." Steam and electricity are only in their teens, and we fast men will be voted awfully slow coaches a century hence, depend upon it, for this reason among others—incapacity to navigate the air. We were going, by log measurement, fourteen miles an hour, and a sea-bird the while leisurely sailed round us, now taking a peep at the tafrail, and now at the cat-head, just, as it were, to show his contempt for our supposed velocity. Who dare prophesy that steam fans shall never be used to propel a balloon, that weighty hulls shall not soar under gas, nor the bird be outstripped in his element? *Try again*, ye cunning in aerology. Watt was baffled in his labours, and Franklin too, but their conceptions have revolutionized a world.

Licensed rowing boats, painted blue, green, yellow, &c., and curled at the prow and stern like Oriental slippers, crowded round us as we

dropped anchor, all on the *qui vive* to secure a fare; parties had been arranged overnight, and by sixes and sevens we departed from the steamer to gladden Malta tradesmen and hotel keepers, whose shops were opened at an unusually early hour in expectation of our advent.

How we threaded the "cursed streets of stairs," which, nevertheless, are easily mounted and luxurious to descend. How we criticised from parapet and bastion the surrounding country, and gazed admiringly down on fortified gardens all golden with orange-laden trees; then, plunging into the crowded stradas, witnessed flocks of goats marching from door to door to be milked, and mules, graceful as antelopes, drawing vehicles anything but graceful. How we jostled fat friars, peered into the faces of suspicious signoras, turned over jewellery without buying any, and marvelled at masons shaping stones with an axe—must be familiar to the many who have visited Malta, and imagined by the few who have not.

Of course, every one looked at the Church of St. John, for every one had heard of it; but no description can give an idea of the reality—gorgeous it is to a fault, and in detail too elaborate. Its marble flooring, richly inlaid with the heraldic devices of each Malta knight; its altars, hung with broidered drapery and groaning under a weight of silver; its vaulted ceilings and spacious walls covered with Sacred paintings; oppress the sight, and bewilder the senses. Then, in its chapels, and screens, and tombs, what an amount of the precious metal! By Jingo, they would richly repay a raid!—sacrilegious thought! but suggested by gazing on the poor squalid devils, blear-eyed and pock pitted, sprinkled over the building (and in horrid contrast to it), to whom an ounce of candlestick, or the knob of some silver lion's tail, would have been a godsend.

Hush! tread softly! for two busy-handed priests in white robes are muttering at the altar, and half a dozen genuflecting priests, in

black, are muttering on the floor, and sundry fat, well-to-do-looking citizens, seated at their ease, are likewise muttering—how far intelligibly to themselves is a question. Now, Hades seize that ubiquitous *portinajo*, who will persist in tracking us, bobbing his head over our shoulders, and speaking incomprehensible English at every twist of our cervical vertebres. What, in the name of Fortune, does he take us for? Dukes, or princes of the blood in disguise? Oh, ho! I begin to comprehend. Since nothing will shake him off but a digital dive into our waistcoat pockets, let us raise the damask entrance curtain and depart.

Malta has other sights than St. John's: the Catacombs is one of them, where dead priests, in full canonicals, are fixed upright in ghastly rows, to be admired by future generations, their mental existences having bequeathed nothing for posterity to cherish. We did not trouble them with our plebeian presence, their brethren in the flesh being sufficiently numerous to

satisfy curiosity as to their probable antecedents, physical and moral, and obscure cartilage had no charms for us. Well, there remained the Armoury; so thither we repaired, in hopes of seeing

> "The shields, the casques, and pennon'd spears
> Of warriors famed in story."

But that repository was under the hands of the mason and whitewasher, and a confused heap of warlike paraphernalia strewed the floor, most suggestive of a recently foughten field, not wanting in slaughtered *illustrissimi*—the unbroken casings of full-attired knights mingling with the rubbish. We were disappointed and done up; a peculiar sensation under the waistcoat warned us there were other requirements than sight seeing, and a caffè being contiguous, we concluded our morning's entertainment with an omelette breakfast, repairing thereafter on board without experiencing further adventure, unless a trait of Maltese modesty, which fell under our observation, may be termed such. It was

this: a very small puppy, the smallest I ever saw, was offered us (most probably by a dog-stealer) for the infinitesimal sum of five pounds sterling. Of course, we gave it.

If there be a specific definition for dirt, it is a steamer coaling. The grimy particles set in motion during that indispensable but filthy performance, penetrate every crevice and corner of the vessel not hermetically sealed, and find their way through broad-cloth and linen with a celerity truly marvellous. Expectorate, and your saliva will be diluted coal dust; wash your hands, and forthwith the water is metamorphosed into black ink; brush your hair, and every bristle in the instrument shall rise up in judgment against you, and testify to the impurity of your mental superstructure. Yes, an evil of the blackest die is coaling on board a steam-boat, and where the Malta *mineral* is concerned, or, more properly speaking, the mineral stored at Malta, the *ne plus ultra* of uncleanliness, owing to the dryness of the

atmosphere there, which causes the coal when burnt to evaporate in smoke of the densest hue, and to shower in the direction of the wind more pecks of dirt than humanity, estimated by the million, will be forced to eat in a lifetime.

It is an ill wind that blows nobody good —and until steamers are compelled to consume their own smoke, outfitters will warble, "Oh, be joyful." Assist us, Mr. Bright, for though the representative of Birmingham, you are also the champion of Reform, and will scarcely consider the consumption of piece goods so *grave* a matter as consumption of the lungs.

But the coaling, thank God, is over; our decks, flooded by an inexhaustible hose, resume a wholesome appearance, and we hurry from Malta after a visit of eleven hours' duration, seven of which were hours of darkness, and as such, available only to "gentlemen who never sleep." Of this class was the gallant artillery officer before mentioned; impatient of delay, he betook himself to a boat as soon as we dropped

anchor, mounted on horseback as soon as he landed, and measured his length on the ground as soon as he started, dislocating his shoulder in the fall, which, however, the heavy fist of a medical doctor, soon knocked into its socket again. Old campaigners are not to be disheartened by trifles; his energy in procuring breakfast for a party of ladies next morning at at inn, from which many were sent hungry away, and his masterly discovery of a shoulder of mutton in a larder said to possess no meat, proved that he not only thoroughly comprehended the martial technicality, "right shoulders forward," but, that had fate so ordained it, he would have made as illustrious a Soyer as he assuredly will a soldier.

When the thermometer stands at zero, and meddling with cold iron is apt to burn one's fingers, no objections attach to close packing, but our cuticles tell a different tale as we race along the coast of Africa, where the thermometer never stands at zero. I said so to Mr.

Grubbus, who acquiesced in the justness of my remark, ignorant that it precluded a grumble. Who is Mr. Grubbus?

Mr. G. is our purser, a fat, oily man, ætat. fifty, with a central appendage so preposterously prominent, that it has prevented him visioning his own boots, when on, for some years past; nevertheless, his head is screwed the right way on his shoulders.

"Then how comes it you have placed us three and four in a cabin, Mr. Grubbus?" said I.

Mr. G. is a man fertile in resources, and knows how to correct impertinence without resorting to personality. "My dear sir," said Mr. Grubbus, "a similar question was put to me not long since by a homeward-bound passenger, previous to our leaving Alexandria, and I suggested to him that the nuisance might probably be overcome by his waiting for the next mail boat.

"'Wait for the next mail boat!' said the gentleman, lifting up his hands and eyes, 'that

would never do—I couldn't think of it; besides, the doctors have forbidden me to linger, and I am impatient to reach home for sundry reasons.'

"'All our passengers are impatient,' was my reply, 'and that is why we put three and four in a cabin.'"

The purser's logic was not bad; by paying a defined sum, one may secure a cabin to himself. If one declines to pay that sum, and is cognizant at the time of the consequences which may result from his parsimony (and it is his own fault if he remains ignorant, the Company's regulations being all printed) what right has he to grumble at an overflowing season?

Grumblers are numerous, notwithstanding.

CHAPTER III.

Importance of moving quickly—Rapidity of change—Alexandria and its harbour—Impatience to desert the ship—Toozle and Bolus—What steamer's ports vomit—Muddy landing and omnibus crushing—Hotels, rain, new arrivals, and Alexandrian watchmen—Early departure for train—John Bull's travelling peculiarities—Off we go—What we see—Entrance into Cairo—Folly of hurry—Opinion of Cairo—Departure from ditto—The Desert—Race in the desert—The gallant artilleryman again—Entrance into Suez—Reflections—Hotels at Suez—Egyptian railway carriages.

GETTING quickly over the ground is in our days considered of more importance than delving deeply into it.

Instance literal: The modern gold-digger disdains to sink a shaft; when his spade will no longer perform its functions he shoulders it, and betakes himself to another find.

Instance figurative: The literary man puzzles not his brains in mastering or exhausting one branch of study, but sipping a little from every flower, rattles away to the unbounded delight of ladies fair and the horror of university professors.

Instance literal and figur(e)ative: The modern mania for calculating fortunes on paper, which is done with a celerity and seeming truthfulness that makes speculation irresistible, thereby bringing us acquainted with the insolvent court almost to a man.

Travellers in the secure clutch of the P. and O. Company, become of necessity "fast fellows." Scarcely have their eyes taken in one novelty, and their minds begun to analyse it, ere some few revolutions of a certain magical screw deposit them in a locality totally different to the last, breeding a confusion of ideas similar to that confusion of sight experienced when gazing on a dissolving picture in process of

transformation. "Heigh presto!" as conjurors say, and Malta vanishes in thin air, giving place to an Egyptian prospect, the port and city of Alexandria.

Yes, here we are, this 17th day of December, spinning into that ancient haven, Pompey's Pillar the while looking an awfully tame affair for all its associations, and a cluster of windmills, far away to the right of it, excessively animating, for they are all in uproarious swing, fully prepared to annihilate any number of Don Quixotes who may venture to dispute their might of arm. Grind on, oh, giants! 'ye are but completing a process commenced by your master; 'tis yours to crush Egyptian grain, and his to crush the men who rear it.

A Mussulman pilot, in blue bag breeches and red fez cap, is lording it on the steamer's bridge, and Egyptian men-of-war, sadly wanting in paint, are lords of the crowded harbour, in which are flying the flags of many nations, but no pennants save those of his Highness the

Pasha; these quiver and whisk about wildly, for the breeze is fresh, and has agitated the sea to biliousness, if we may judge by the look of his waves, which are the colour of jaundiced mud. A submerged reef, running parallel with the coast, and indicated by several cone-shaped buoys, is just on the point of being rounded, and a hundred broad-shouldered men, in heavy marching order, and wedged like sheep in a railway truck, are surging towards the gangway, eager to secure the first boats that shall be alongside, when we drop anchor. Down it goes, out runs the noisy chain cable, and swinging to the tide, we are beset by a sufficient number to carry away ten times one hundred; but *hotel* accommodation may not be so easily procurable, and that accounts for the eagerness of every one to desert the ship. Toozle quite forgets he has a friend named Bolus, who would much like to halve expenses with him—can't wait, my boy, mentally says Toozle, seeing Bolus's hat and neck ineffectually oscillating far

off in the crowd. So down go his carpet-bag and other personal accoutrements into the boat, their owner following, leaving Bolus to his fate, who being a philosopher simply mutters, "it is the way of the world," and bides his time because he can't help himself.

One of the steamer's ports, meanwhile, is vomiting no end of green, blue, black, and yellow mail boxes, wherein are contained the outpourings of thousands of minds and purses, destined to diffuse gladness, sorrow, wealth or poverty, through many a home in the wide regions of Asia. And stewards having pocketed their half-guinea fees, in defiance of laws to the contrary, are collecting the heavy baggage of their various late masters for delivery to the Egyptian Transit Company, who will not permit us to vision them again until we embark at Suez.

All, from Sir John down to the patient Bolus, have landed at last; and the steamer, like the hearts of her late occupants, is lighter for the

fact. But, shades of Cheops and Cleopatra! what soil is this we are treading, or rather wading through? the mud of Wapping on the dirtiest of days is nothing to it—'tis literally "ankle deep;" nor is one friendly stone to be seen peeping above the filth on which to poise ourselves. Weugh! we are in for it, and must run the gauntlet, whatever the consequences; so, flopping, floundering, with blasphemies from the male sex, and pretty exclamations of shocked propriety from the females, we scramble into the omnibuses waiting for us, where (wedged together like herrings in a barrel, licence to carry being a very free one) we mass our mud and persons, and jolt away for the palace-like hotels, with feelings anything but Christian, and appearances certainly not becoming.

The principal hotels all stand in the same street, and are conducted on the French system; the "Peninsular and Oriental," kept by Philip Zech, combines fair accommodation with moderate charges. Scarcely were we housed, ere the

rain came down in torrents, and the whole of the grand square wore the appearance of a turbid lake; under such damping circumstances, a perambulatory survey of the town was impossible: what could be seen from our lattices, was all we might hope to learn of Alexandria. The arrival, however, of the homeward-bound mail passengers, about this time, helped to lessen our disappointment and *ennui*. The hotel became choked with Feringhees; unremitting gossip was the order of the day, and many were the glasses emptied, and the cheroots smoked, ere the gatherers, from two very different hemispheres, sought their musquito-curtained beds, and, like myself, perhaps, half sleeping, half awake, heard through the night those strange, unearthly cries, peculiar to the watchmen of Alexandria, who, perched in boxes at short distances from each other, adopt this method of showing their vigilance and strength of lungs.

Before nine next morning, we were again

huddled in the Company's omnibuses, on our way to the railway station, jolting through streets which, if a specimen of the rest of Alexandria, left us little to regret in having been rain-bound the day previous. Ruin, squalor, and poverty were the prevailing features of the neighbourhood we traversed, added to which, it was "water, water everywhere," so that when we reached the terminus, the omnibuses had to back close against the platform to enable us to escape dry shod.

And now commenced John Bull's strange propensity for making a fool of himself. Though the carriages were waiting expressly for our party, though the train could have been lengthened five times over, if necessary, and though the hour for starting had not arrived, what must young England do but bully the unfortunate Egyptian policeman, force their way out of rooms by wrong exits, and plunge through carriage windows whose doors were locked, for no earthly reason, save that of

showing their spirit of independence to the Pagan; and, as regards those who had been so eager to seat themselves, voluntarily to emerge again by the way they entered, their undisputed appropriation of vacant cushions, and the quiet and solitude entailed upon themselves by such wonderful strategy, proving rather a damper to their hot blood and valiant intentions.

How meekly would similar Goliaths have deported themselves on the platforms of Euston Square or Paddington!

The engine is at length attached, and gazed upon by a score or two of half-naked boys, and blear-eyed women, begging for "Bukshees;" the iron giant whirls us through the Scripture-famed land of Egypt, alas! but for its associations, as dreary and unpicturesque a land as ever man traversed, flat and swampy all the way to Cairo, with not a town on the route deserving of the name, but Esquimaux-shaped hovels in abundance, of the same muddy tint as the landscape.

To enter into details of a route already described by a hundred pens, is not the object of this compilation, 'tis simply a narrative of personal adventure, such as all travellers, booked through from Southampton to Calcutta by the P. and O. Company, may expect to meet with. For particulars of the localities passed on the line, he is referred to "Murray's Hand-book;" all I have to tell the wayfarer on this head is, should he not have made up his mind to visit the Pyramids, to look out of the windows on his right hand, before reaching Cairo (provided he faces the engine), when he will see them all three, without injury to his pocket or danger to his person; and should he be hurried along as we were, he must sacrifice a night's rest to see more.

"There they are, madam!" said a girlish-faced youngster of sixteen to a bonny Scotch mamma, shortly after we left the Kalaub station, his head and neck having been sturdily thrust through the open window, in defiance of climate,

for a period of time which I failed to note by watch. "There they are!" "Oh! let me see!" said the lady, and out went her head, and out went all our heads in turn; and, looking along the line of carriages, every window showed a head—some two. And there they were, sugar-loaf mountains and no mistake, clear and sharp, as I had many years before beheld them—in my illustrated school books.

The flooding of the Nile had subsided, and vegetation was everywhere visible, but of too recent a growth to give character to the landscape: it reminded me, more than any thing else, of those incipient mustaches seen on the faces of youth just budding into manhood.

At 4 P.M., we entered Cairo; this time *not* to be disappointed. Its prefix, "grand," is no misnomer; all pertaining to it looked imposing, that is to say, all we had leisure to see of it. Clean, commodious carriages and numerous omnibuses awaited our arrival at the terminus: the aristocratical-minded took possession of the

first, the plebeian-natured, as a matter of course, of the second.

Though "every one for himself, and God for all," seems the motto with P. and O. passengers, helter-skelter men will find themselves no better off in the long run than individuals who take matters coolly. Accommodation is provided for every one, and the last comers fare no worse than the first as regards conveyance; but if one is scrupulous about his hotel, he may, it is true, find himself in the wrong box by tardiness of action. For a short sojourn, however, feverishness on this head is folly; the shades of difference between the hotels are trifling, and a man runs no risk of remaining houseless, which is the principal matter after all; so take things easy, boys, and enter with philosophical resignation any inn your omnibus may chance to hail from. Our drive led through spacious thoroughfares, whence palacelike edifices were visible in every direction, the hotels, which are here on a very large scale, yielding to few of them in

appearance. But the structure, *par excellence*, is the tomb or mosque of Mehemit Ally, a mausoleum worthy of a monarch, and commandingly situated, from which an extensive view of Cairo and the citadel may be obtained.

After partaking of a table d'hôte dinner in the Hotel d'Orient, where foreigners do abound, we indulged in a moonlight stroll, and smoked our cigars beneath overhanging trees in the gardens of Cairo. Carriages were driving about the streets with torch-bearers running in front of them, and donkeys, adorned with tassels and embroidered saddles, bore less ambitious individuals hither and thither, who greeted us with a friendly salaam as they jogged along; this, with a fleeting peep at portions of the Bazaar, was all we saw of Cairo.

By half-past eight next morning we were again summoned to the relentless train, and in less than a quarter of an hour after starting, found ourselves on the borders of the Desert, where soon nothing was visible but boulders of

rock, rubble, and sand hills, varied occasionally by a string of camels, who seemed no way disconcerted by our appearance, and scarcely deigned to turn their heads as we passed. Our speed, however, was not astounding—eighteen miles, or thereabouts—a pace most despicable in the eyes of the Pasha, who, we were informed, when travelling by rail, always drives the engine himself, and is never satisfied with less than fifty miles an hour.

We halted several times in the Desert, at stations designated by number (single huts generally, with an attendant truck), and on these occasions, for want of something better to do, amused ourselves by picking up pebbles and dashing them to fragments against larger ones, in hopes of finding something valuable.

The only *event* of the day occurred shortly before we reached our destination. In expectation of our arrival, a meal had been prepared for us under some tents in the Desert, and rumour having it that the fare and accommoda-

tion would be scant, a sharp look-out was kept for the locality by the knowing ones; no sooner was it visioned, than the enterprising artillery officer before mentioned climbed out of his carriage window, and, by a well-calculated spring, lighted on the ground without injury to his personality. The train was moving gradually, but before it could come to a standstill most of the passengers had followed his example, and a truly exciting race began for the tents. The ground was well adapted for the purpose, being level as a bowling-green, and, with the exception of a few isolated stones, offered no obstacles to the swift of foot. So away went stout men and lean, helter-skelter, attired in all imaginable headpieces; their elbows stiffened, their coat tails flying in the wind, their heels showing a strange partiality for the bump behind. The ladies, who from their carriages, obtained an uninterrupted view, were highly edified, and would, doubtless, gladly have joined in the race themselves had propriety permitted.

Sad to say, the artilleryman was not first in, as he deserved to be, since gallantry prompted *his* movements. To secure a plate for Sir John's lady he risked *his* neck, whereas too many of his competitors were on selfish thoughts intent, and would not have broken into a canter for the sake of any stomachs but their own.

About 5 P.M., we entered Suez at a walking pace, the line being but newly opened through; as we were the first arrivals by train so far, groups of dirty, but seemingly very jovial Arabs, male and female, assembled to greet us, and, as usual, were loud in their demands for "bukshees." Railway-lumber of all descriptions strewed the ground, heightening the miserable look of the locality, which, since the days of Pharaoh's hosts, has never had anything to recommend it.

At the distance of about half a mile from the town, we were transferred to vans, wretchedly old and ricketty, which drove us direct to the pier-

head, where a tug steamer was in waiting to receive us, and where we again saw, piled up so as to form quite a barricade, our heavy baggage taken possession of by the Transit Company at Alexandria.

And now, while it is being transferred to the steam tug, let us suppose you and myself, reader, seated on her gunwale, watching the process and exchanging ideas.

"A bustling scene," you remark, removing at the same time a half-smoked cigar from your mouth, and whisking its long ash into the clear blue water.

"For little Suez, certainly," I reply (myself puffing the fragrant leaf), "considering that twenty-five years ago the appearance of an European in this place was an event of rare occurrence, and that a steam-boat seen in the port would have frightened half her old women into fits. *Now*, every month brings to her shores almost as many *Feringhees* as she has inhabitants, and when the railway (traversed

from end to end, eastward, for the first time to-day) shall have arrived at maturity, who knows but that the very Desert we have just crossed may grow ashamed of its solitude, and bristle with the habitations of men."

"And the faith of Mahomet vanish with the Desert," you observe parenthetically, but psychologically.

"By Jove! I fear one is contingent upon the other: *nous verrons.*"

The hotel at Suez* was found not to answer, and when we arrived had ceased to be one; a glass of grog, however, was procurable there, and for a consideration one might calculate on a biscuit; but when the proposed railway pier is completed, and the line in thorough working order, an hotel will be indispensable. The sooner, too, certain nameless conveniences are

* The hotel has since been reopened by the P. and O. Company, but till the prices charged become more reasonable, it can hope for little support; the *nameless inconveniences* too, have been partly remedied, but so inefficiently as to prove almost unserviceable; much yet remains to be done.

erected in the Desert, the better for propriety; an exposed plain is not a pleasant resort for the votaries of seclusion, and suffering humanity implies more than is expressed in the reports of Poor Law Commissioners.

The carriages on the line, both first and second class, are all that can be desired—airy, commodious, and comfortably cushioned; a bruised backbone and other miseries attendant on hard accommodation, are not yet to be dreaded; and if ever the Pasha's shares should be at a discount, we trust no pigheaded advisers will recommend him to improve them by taking an example from Great Britain, who, however liberal to her citizens on Lord Mayor's Day, is eminently conservative and close-fisted in matters relating to railway management.

CHAPTER IV.

Fairly afloat—Saloons again—Claret—New faces—Musquitos—Cabin-packing—Leaky hose—A Scotchman's and Spaniard's disagreements—How they settled matters—Inconveniences c anvassed—Mount SinaiReflections—Lascars and Seedys—Seedy dance—Climbing cadets—Scorching skies—Babel Mandeb Straits and Perrim Island settlement—The flowery wreaths of Lalla Rookh—Description of coast—Aden—Divers—White money: adventure of a half-crown—Donkeys *ad libitum*—How human donkeys were made by them—Hike, Hike—Aden cantonments—Return to ship.

AGAIN we are fairly afloat—afloat on the sea of the Pharaohs—on the sea that opened for Israel's host and closed on her would-be destroyers. Gloriously blue is its water, as different from that of the Mediterranean as indigo from ultramarine; and the P. and O. steamer

that bears us—larger than the last—is slicing it in twain with an energy that makes her quiver from forefoot to stern post. The baggage, a freight in itself, has long since disappeared from sight in her capacious hold; not a box missing, or a lock injured, though here and there some regulation portmanteaus may have lost a strap, purloined probably at Alexandria or Cairo, for donkey harness; but we were cautioned against portmanteau straps, so have no right to grumble.

And, again, we are carousing in panel-painted saloons, but with many strange faces among us; some Marseilles arrivals; others, late sojourners in Egypt. The saloon, despite its two longitudinal tables, and its table athwartships, will not dine anything like the number of first class passengers, so tables are fitted up outside, and thither the laggards betake themselves at feeding time—"first come, first served," being the rule here, as it was on the European side.

And now the claret lover—and who loves not

claret?—may luxuriate in that he loveth: delicious is it, combined with water, as a breakfast beverage in the hot Red Sea, and commend me to it at dinner time also, rather than to beer, for heaviness cometh of the latter. We have it in abundance; it is not bad, and from its woollen-padded jacket of red or blue, as the case may be, emerges delightfully cool.

I said we had new faces among our set; some of them are female faces—faces that would be pretty but for the ravages of—musquito-pox; one golden-haired girl *is* a victim to it, and no mistake—a wholesale proprietor of crimson pimples; her very eyelids seem weighed down by them. Poor creature! she half dreads the gaze of man—a fatal symptom where young ladies are concerned; but let her be of good heart, there is yet "balm in Gilead;" musquitos are unerring judges of blood, and the attentions they have paid her are veritable proofs she needs not sarsaparilla to purify it. To *me* she is an object of envy, the liquid of my veins having

failed to tempt even a sip from that sanguinary brood, albeit I slept at Cairo out of pure benevolence, with no covering save a sheet; they reconnoitred me it is true, and buzzed their opinions pretty audibly, but the result was a retreat, and I awoke next morning unhonoured by a scar.

Nor is it in the saloon alone that new faces greet us, or that space is circumscribed. Two Spaniards, a Frenchman, and a stout Scotch skipper have taken the places of my late cabin mates, and a strange amalgamation of tongues might be heard by the eavesdropper at ablution time, as we debate who shall first dip into the solitary basin. Yes, reader, one basin only ave we between five—think of that when your turn comes to embark—and a single earthenware vessel, of a different construction, for the same number: proofs, with a vengeance, that comfort does not always go with riches, for that quini paid in the aggregate £530 passage money.

To add to the discomfort of our crowded

cabin, a leaky hose led through it; then one of the Spaniards was partial to heat, and the Scotchman abhorred it, consequently the latter (who was a late bird) when he sought his pillow, generally found the port closed, and unceremoniously opened it again. The Iberian, waking perhaps in the middle of the night, and noticing the state of affairs, would, after assuring himself of the skipper's somnolency, scramble from his bunk, and with his naked legs in unpleasant proximity to my nose, restore it to its original position. The result was a wordy duel more than once fired across the cabin by these worthies, a single specimen of which will suffice.

"Sacre nom de Dieu, Mr. Span'yard, or whatever you dub yoursel', I winna be grilled alive for any furriner breathin'—dom me if I wull."

"Grielle, grielle—how you say grielle? Dios! it is the cho-lo-rá we will take if port not make shut out night aire."

"Cholera be d—d! 'tis ower much stink that brings cholera!"

"Ha! diavolo! where from come stink? from me, non. I am Spanish nobile, capitane; you not exhibit good education to speak so."

A *sotto voce* curse from the skipper, and the belligerents withdraw.

Inconveniences of the kind I have recorded, are, however, trifles light as air, compared with those experienced when the sole highway to India led round the Cape of Good Hope. Bad water and scant, wearisome confinement, compulsory association with men for a length of time, one would perhaps give a right arm to escape from, were but a few of the evils of that route; and though shelving five individuals in a space eight feet by eight, may, at first sight, appear less captivating than an airy cabin to oneself, and the smell of a steam engine, in addition to sea motion, more nauseating than motion without smell, still when speed, diet, variety of scene, and exciting bustle are considered, the balance preponderates greatly in

favour of what is termed the overland passage, which not even the invasion of my toes by rats (and they were more than once invaded) would induce me to abandon for the other.

Mounts Horeb and Sinai were half hidden in misty clouds when we passed them, but days of "auld lang syne" recurred strongly to my memory on beholding their rugged crests; not the "auld lang syne" of Scripture history though, I regret to say, which would have been the orthodox thing, but the remembrance of modern and commonplace events connected with the fat prior and jolly monks of Sinai's Monastery, "in the days we"—that is, myself and other Englishmen—"went gipsying a long time ago," and drank their anniseed, and laughed in our sleeves at their "burning bush," and criticised their visiters' book, hoping all things, believing most things, suffering anything with the careless indifference of youth. Happy days, ere liver and lost opportunities had soured our natures and saucered our cheeks! Ah me! a

Scriptural rhapsody on those God hallowed mountains might seem more in keeping with their appearance, but it would have been a sham emotion, which the remembrance of days "when hopes were young, and hearts were warm," was *not*, and moreover, those lines in Peter Bell, I fear, apply to myself,

> "A primrose on the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

I was never quick at extracting sermons from stones, and if the identical tablets said to have been shattered on or in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai were placed before my eyes, as before the eyes of some credulous people they *have been*, the result I fear would be very damaging to my enthusiastic capacity. And if imagination condescended at all to overshadow me, Hugh Miller, rather than Moses, the Tribes, and the Ten Commandments, would be the figure she put on.

The P. and O. vessels on the Asiatic side have the greater portion of their crews composed

of Indian Lascars and Seedys. The first of these, a listless and effeminate race, are only conspicuous for their want of energy, but the negroes, like their countrymen in the west (be the amount of work what it may) seem never to lose their animal spirits or propensity for fun. Ours were especially jolly, for ever tripping it on the fantastic though not light toe, sometimes singly, sometimes in company: four, however, as in a reel, were requisite to make a complete set, and their method of dancing was this: each man at the commencement simultaneously clapped his hands, holding his arms well in advance of his body, and stamping at the same time with one foot thrown forward, cut sundry comical capers; he then stretched an arm out full length towards his *vis-à-vis*, who, acting in like manner, their hands of course met, a hearty slap testifying to the collision. Various repetitions of the above constituted the dance, which is timed by some extemporary song, the words of the one usually chanted by our

men being, "Tumbācco hūmna dōoladoo dōoladoo." Corrupt Hindustani, which may be translated thus—"Give us, give us tobacco."

While the thick-lipped fraternity were by their antics attracting the notice of one group of passengers, another would probably be seen denuded of their coats, with their shirt-sleeves tucked up, playing quoits beside the engine-room, and a third—young cadets and civilians generally—experimentalising in the rigging, or perilling their necks by climbing ropes on the hand-over-hand system, highly delighted if the ladies condescended to look on, doubly delighted if an exclamation of terror escaped any of them, for was it not synonymous to calling one a daring fellow? Many a youngster have I seen with his face purple, and his every effort indicative of exhaustion, stubbornly persist in hanging on by his hands, after his nether man was powerless, in the vain hope of working himself a span higher in altitude and estimation, regardless of the ludicrous position of his legs,

a deal too far through his trousers, and the cramped, peachy shaped appearance of the part usually concealed by a coat tail.

Beneath the scorching skies of the Red Sea, saloons and cabins do not prove attractive, they are far too hot. One's only haven of refuge is the upper deck, under whose awnings the passengers wile away the hours not devoted to eating, lounging in every imaginable chair for which patents have been taken out, covering the skylights and side lockers, choking up the forecastle, each employed according to his own devices.

We passed through the Straits of Babel Mandeb at 3 P.M., of the 24th of December, and tried hard with our telescopes to discover some traces of the unfortunates banished to the Island of Perrim, not for any breach of their country's laws, but because the nation of which they were loyal subjects, entertained queer notions of *meum* and *tuum*.

That nation, fearing political thieves might

break in and steal part of its eastern possessions some day, resolved as a precautionary measure to commit petty larceny itself, on the principle, I suppose, of "setting a thief to catch a thief." The Chubb lock that preserves India intact (wise people tell us) is the Red Sea—too weighty an article to be made away with easily; but what if the *key* could be abstracted? bright thought—no sooner suggested than carried into execution, and Perrim Island thenceforward was occupied by a British force, who, on its bare rock (four and a half miles long by two broad), as they now and then vision a turtle, or a passing packet boat, no doubt fully appreciate the wisdom of H.M. counsellors, and would like nothing better than an opportunity of showing their respect, by entertaining those worthies on the island as long as they themselves sojourn in it.

The cocoa-nuts and flowery wreaths, tossed by the Arab sailors of Moore's "Lalla Rookh," into the waters of this strait by way of pro-

pitiation, must—at least the flowers—have been sadly faded before they fell into the hands of the Peris, or tickled the throats of the sharks, for between Suez and the entrance to its sea, save burnt barren rock and arid sand, there is nought. Nevertheless, the coast has attractions for many, just as an out and out looking Italian bandit has. It is not always beauty that fascinates. I have known ladies turn with contempt from admirers of the other sex, who possessed all that feminine beauty they so much prize in themselves, and rapturously expatiate on the attractions of some hirsute horror, simply because he was so very like the hero ruffian of a favourite novel, or a character in history that had enthralled their girlhood. Verdureless, rugged, rocky coasts, owing any tints they may chance to possess to sunshine and cloud, and seemingly unapproachable save by birds of prey, viewed from a distance possess a sombre charm, and suggest thoughts nearer akin to the grand and excep-

tional in nature, than do shores more favoured and commonplace.

By dawn of Christmas day, we were at anchor in the port of Aden, another political prison-house kindly fitted up for the accommodation of Bombay *militaires*. The jabberings of Arab boatmen, fighting for precedence of place alongside the steamer, awoke those who had not felt sufficient interest in the locality to remain out of their beds, and all were soon on deck, either for the purpose of landing, or to watch the gambols of the divers, who seem to consider it a matter of course that money should be chucked to them, and who swim round the ships like so many fishes, as soon as they anchor, with that speculation in view.

"Hi, master! throw—throw—money throw —this way, master—I pick up," were the words in common use among them, and which welled up, sometimes clearly, sometimes half gurglingly, as their solicitations were responded to, or otherwise.

If one may judge by the almost uniform success that attended the efforts of those who had coin tossed to them, the diving feat, as far as the dusky sons of Aden are concerned, is not a difficult one; a loss was rare, and a copper as easily recovered from the briny element, as the more brilliant metal. "White money, master—white money—throw it white money," was, however, the usual cry, when after a magnificent descent, some poor devil came to the surface with a despised farthing or halfpenny between his teeth. In the hope of witnessing a dive extraordinary, I exhibited half-a-crown to some greedy expectants, and holding it edgewise, shot it into the water with all my force. Down went a couple of darkies—perpendicularly down—so that the soles of their feet (the only white parts about them, by the way) showed flat as Victoria Reginas, but all to no purpose; the half-crown embellishes Aden's harbour bottom to this day, and I discovered that it is because my method of throwing on that occasion makes the

exception and not the rule, that so few failures take place. A coin dropped horizontally into the water, sinks slowly, by angular gradations, and is secured before it descends any distance; but tossed edgewise, it not only outstrips the diver in speed, but attains a depth which (even allowing he can see it distinctly) no kicking of his legs will enable him to reach. Sinking is not such an easy matter as people think, and the many cases of drowning recorded have, I fear, but too often their origin in the text of Hosea, "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

Aden seemed to possess donkeys in abundance, and before we left, statistics tended to prove them not all confined to the quadruped species: solicitations to mount the true genus were pressing enough, and the zeal displayed by their owners in urging the animals forward, most praiseworthy for the space of about half a mile or so; but that distance accomplished, a demand for prepayment or double fare, invariably startled the nerves of the hitherto placid riders,

causing them to suspend their playful sallies, and "gee wo dobbins" with an abruptness only equalled in comicality by the sudden dilation of their eyes: non-compliance among our fellows was, in most cases, fatal to their peace: the donkeys appeared suddenly smitten with exhaustion, and their hitherto energetic drivers, Balaam-like in their regrets for past severities. Half a mile's experience, however, had taught us that "*hike, hike*" was a term significant of "go a-head," and that coupled with a little physical illustration, the donkeys thoroughly understood its meaning; so *we* "hiked" and flourished *our* sticks in true Tipperary fashion, and worked our heels till they ached again, but all in vain; the long-eared fraternity were neither to be cajoled by Feringhee Arabic, or cowed by British cudgelling: Bedouin and beast had a mutual understanding, and the utmost that could be got out of the latter was an elevation of the back, and a horizontal extension of the hind legs. Such being the state of affairs,

nothing remained but to surrender at discretion, or dismount and walk back to the pier head. Some decided one way, some the other, and a few got over both difficulties by adopting a line of argument which rarely fails to convince an Asiatic, to wit, the *argumentum baculinum*, but these were old hands.

After traversing flat ground for some distance, the Aden Cantonments are reached by a gradually ascending path, running along the seaboard of the outer town, its highest elevation terminating in a pass, wherein a military guard is picketted; it then turns sharp off to the right, by a somewhat abrupt descent, and is ultimately absorbed in a spacious plain, encircled by lofty hills; after emerging from the pass, the prospect becomes inexpressibly grand and imposing—

> "Mountain o'er mountain piled—
> Crag upon crag,"

rugged, verdureless, and of a deep brown umber colour. At intervals, along the pinnacles of these foe-defying precipices, watch-towers are

erected, from which an enemy in the plain beyond may be descried many a mile off; and threadlike looking zigzag paths, seemingly safe for the passage of goats only, intersect their inner surfaces.

The Cantonment, laid out with true military stiffness and precision, is a tame enough affair to look at, but hospitable fellows vegetate there; and as an inn for such as are chary of making acquaintance is available, the P. and O. explorer, provided he can surmount the donkey difficulty, need not dread returning to his ship with an empty stomach, in addition to a scorched brainpan.

After sketching a crag or two, I returned by the way I came, in company with half-a-dozen jolly tars, on leave from an Indian naval vessel, all of whom had taken part in the "Persian war," and were anxious to learn if a medal would be given for that illustrious campaign; 'tis *un fait accompli*, and another triumph to vanity, in this age of mingled, mighty, and Liliputian performances.

CHAPTER V.

What Aden possesses, and what Timmins took—Sun sinking when we got up steam—Last day of the year—The brew—Space, space, and a do—Space, space, and a dance—Songs and their singers—Ringing out old year—Great excitement—Melancholy reflections—Pt. de Galle and a Spaniard's enthusiasm—Gibbert Island—Baffled sketchers—"Ring, want it, master?"—Ceylon and Birmingham jewellery—Commander of French forces—What *we* did when he left, and what *he* did—Departure from Galle—Another running down case.

ADEN has oysters on her rocks, and gay shells in her shallows, and a Parsee shop within a stone's throw of her landing-place, stored with every description of slop apparel. Beware of that shop, it is no respecter of pockets—and of that apparel, for it ornamenteth not. Nankeens and brown hollands look tempting, I know, in the eyes of sun-scorched, woollen-clad Feringhees,

but bethink ye of them in Leadenhall Street, or the Strand, when plenteousness girdeth ye round about, and fashion stalketh in every street, then shall thy purse not forgo all its plumpness, nor thy person grow obnoxious to the Graces.

Behold our friend Timmins! his Spartan nature revolted at Stockqueler's estimate: "a light heart and knapsack best beseemeth the soldier," said he, and "sufficient for a month is a suit of gray tweed." All right, Timmins; nothing easier than theoretical heroism; but thy resolution (like Bob Acres' courage) hath melted with the melting of thy person; and the shadow of thy former self in that nankeen monstrosity of a wrapper (a world too wide for thy shrivelled shoulders, and in longitude outrageously Puseyitish) is the penalty paid, in part only, for thy want of foresight and ignorance of personal economy.

The sun was sinking when we got up stream, and mutual greetings, in the shape of lusty

cheers, having been exchanged between the homeward bound mail boat and ourselves, we bade adieu to Aden, and (if three islands, viz., Secotra, Dirza, and Shumna, passed on the 27th December, be omitted) to Arab scenery also.

"And now we are on the wide, wide sea,"

and it is the last day of the year, and secret negociations are in process between the captain and his underlings, who, as darkness gathers over the face of the waters, illuminate the quarter-deck with lanterns, and emerge from below, bearing large trays filled with glasses. On the capstan head a mighty bowl is standing, and beside it our worthy commander; he flourishes his right arm, and a glittering ladle disappears in an ocean of smoking punch, then flashes over a proffered tumbler, and again disappears; and a great and surging crowd hems him round, and numerous and eager arms are stretched towards him; the centre of all eyes is he—the nucleus of a galaxy of crystal goblets.

"Space, space!" shouts a flushed youth, "space for the glass of a lady!" and the crowd opens as one man, at that talismanic word. Gullible crowd! the speaker, young as he is, has mastered a mighty secret — the secret that sways multitudes. He appeals to your sympathies through a sex enshrined in every heart, and dreads no gainsay; but (as with many a plausible politician) 'tis a cloak to ulterior designs, and the prize for which you struggled long and manfully, he has gained with ease by a stroke of cunning. Yes; the lady is a myth, and with his tongue in his cheek, and an arch dropping of the left eyelid, the imposter raises to his own mouth the coveted brew, proud, rather than ashamed of the ruse by which he gained it.

"Space, space!" yet once again shouts a voice; "space for a dance, for a polka!" and like an eddy formed by a sinking pebble, the hitherto massed crowd hollows to a circumference, that Terpsichore (multi-personated by mortals in crinoline) may have her fling. An

obliging band-master, of Dutch antecedents, with fair round belly and full moon face, sparkling through spectacles, squats himself on the skylight, and, with poised fiddle, lowers his chin to the exciting tune of "Pop goes the weasel!" the melody of his catgut being aided by the spasmodic eructations of an accordion, played by a music-loving cadet.

There is a little hesitation at first, on the part of the fair sex, for dancing has not been encouraged hitherto, owing to the want of a band; but women's scruples are short-lived on occasions of this kind, and soon a dozen slim waists are encircled, and their owners to be seen traversing the deck in very eccentric orbits indeed; for a rolling ship (although an inveterate practical joker) is no respecter of symmetrical diagrams. To aid a leg in standing at right angles to its fellow, or a heel in crushing some neighbouring toe; to assist sober men in aping drunkards, and modest dames in personating excessively bold women, it is willing enough; but

for the *Graces* it entertains an instinctive abhorrence, sacrificing them invariably, but never sacrificing *to* them.

Time speeds: the "weasel" has given way to the "drum polka;" the "drum" to various quadrilles; and with heightened colour and flashing eyes, we again congregate round the captain who is siezed with a sudden desire to sing. "Lads and lasses, fill your glasses," though not the burthen of his lay, was the preliminary to it; and with a fresh brew of punch tickling our throats, we were all in the mood for applauding. Few sailors sing with taste, and our skipper would not have made his fortune at the English opera house; but he gave us the "Sentinel," and we expressed our admiration in a manner that might have been considered flattering by a prima donna. One of his mates followed with a comic effusion, and though the laughs he elicited were genuine, it is difficult to say whether they owed their origin to the

humour and execution of the "*Donkey that wouldn't go*" or to himself.

On, on rolls time: he has hurried us through winter frosts and tropical heats, and now brings us face to face with stars strange to the inhabitants of Britain; we see the "Southern Cross" gleaming in the heavens on our right, while the pole star, familiar luminary of Europe and home, still lingers above the horizon on our left, like a friend who loves us and is loath to go.

On, on rolls time: hark! already a sonorous herald proclaims his exit from the old year, and his entrance into the new. Clang! clang! again and again repeated. Hurrah! hip, hip, hurrah-a-a!

> "Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky;
> The flying cloud, the frosty light;
> The year is dying in the night:
> Ring out, wild bells, and let him die."

Yes, we have watched his last gasp; we have pledged to his memory: peace to his manes!

And now, painfully energetic is the shaking of

hands, and cordial the greeting multiplied in every mouth, "*A happy new year to you.*" Glasses clank against glasses, in token of sincerity; all hearts overflow with excitement and with punch. Who has not a soul attuned to music at such moments? who has not the thrush in his throat when his brain is on the wing? not one voice, but all voices now break into song, and "Mourir pour la Patrie," "Yankee Doodle," and "God save the Queen," complete the festivities of our new year's morn.

Have I lingered too long, reader, over a very commonplace occurrence? It may be so; but there are seasons when trifles come home to us laden with painful and absorbing memories. Little thought I, in that hour of foolish revelry, with the intoxicating cup at my lips, and words of meaningless gaiety on my tongue, that those I prized most on earth were then bowed down by a great sorrow; that a young and cherished being was passing away with the passing year, and died when *it* died; and that another equally

beloved one had imbibed the seeds of the malady that killed the first: yet such are the conditions of humanity. Mind, free to speculate and to dream, but in divination powerless as the shadow that flitteth along the wall; in sympathy as easily isolated as the ripened grain of the cornfield. Would we have it otherwise? alas, no! to look beneath the surface is to lose the sun; the metal of the mine has its vein in darkness. "*Spes, fides!*" such be man's motto—foreknowledge without omnipotence were a curse.

After gazing on the barren shores of the Red Sea, "Point de Galle," in the eyes of many, looks very like a terrestrial paradise. "Beautiful, beautiful!" shouted my Spanish cabin mate, thrusting his unkerchiefed neck through the port, as we raced along the outer harbour (decidedly the most picturesque of the two). "Beautiful, beautiful! I am delight beyond ex-pressio;" but though he was a consul and soldier, who had dined, according to his own account, with the late Duke of Wellington, at "Son

petite maison, Ap-pes-ley House," no end of times, I could not altogether share in his enthusiasm. It presents, I admit, a pleasing contrast to the desolate scenery of the African and Arabian coasts; and its varied oriental foliage, intermingled with fortified walls and other buildings of a sombre colour, gave it an appearance of coolness, which, however, experience proved it did not deserve; but its want of *hill* scenery, both as regards middle and extreme distance, deprives it of any higher claim to beauty than that which is expressed in the negative compliment, not ugly.

As we rounded into the anchorage, bringing the town on our port side, a large forest of cocoa-nut trees, flanked by the foliage-tufted, rocky little island of "Gibbert" became visible to the east and northward of us, thus completing the bay, which had a glassy smoothness that reflected, as in a mirror, every object above it, and pleasingly contrasted with the surf boiling over

the point, and twisting and spurting among the isolated rocks adjacent to it.

Shore-goers were numerous, but as it was not my first visit to the place, instead of disembarking, I collected my drawing materials, and seating myself on a grating in rear of the wheel proceeded to sketch. An artistical young lady followed my example, but so powerful were the rays of the sun she had to withdraw almost as soon as her point of sight was fixed upon, and I thus missed the pleasure of comparing notes and insinuating myself into her acquaintance. In spite of awnings and outspread curtains, we were soon panting like hard-run hounds, and one gentlemen of Daniel Lambert proportions seemed in a fair way to melt outright, when, happily for his rotundity and our lungs, down came a flood from the skies, that sopped us after a very different fashion, and our skins were cooled at the expense of our garments.

"Ring, want it, master? opal—emerald—

sapphire? very good rings got it—master wish for buy; please master, look it, see."

European.—"What do you ask for that blue fellow?"

Cingalee.—"Five pounds, master — very cheap."

European.—"I will give you five shillings."

The native restores it to his heap with Asiatic imperturbableness, and exhibits his other wares.

Cingalee, loq.—"Fine gold chain perhaps master will want; *see*, master, very much long! or, if elephant tusk master desire, I got. Beautiful model boat too I will show to master."

European.—"You have not the impudence to call this chain gold?"

Cingalee.—"Gold, master, good gold—very *best* gold; what for I not tell you true?" Smiles and touches his brow with the palm of his hand.

European.—"And what will you sell it for?"

Cingalee.—"As this *very superior* chain,

master, twenty pounds is lowest price I can take; for nothing less I can afford to sell."

Englishman, feigning wrath.—"Be off, you rascal! pack up your rubbish. Do you think I cannot tell bullion from Brummagem?"

Cingalee.—"Angry, master? please not get. What will master give, lowest price? Speak it, one word!" looks as if he was in earnest.

"I will give fifteen shillings, and if that is not enough, go about your business."

"Master, too hard bargain; and *ring*, master; how much will master give it for ring?"

"I have told you, five shillings."

"Here, master, take—both take; I very poor man. Master too much hard upon me."

Such is the way in which trinkets are sold by the Cingalee venders who call on board the P. and O. ships, and inexperienced people are very apt to get bitten by them; the Kandy gold, which forms the setting of most of their jewellery, being extremely taking to the eye, though probably bearing the same value to the real

metal that Bagshot diamonds bear to genuine ones.

As regards *precious stones* (?) Ceylon has, doubtless, her quota of natives, but they are so intermixed with Birmingham make-believes, that unless a man keeps his weather eye open it may chance he will find bestowing a Ceylon jewellery present on an English friend is tantamount to carrying coals to Newcastle. We numbered among our passengers no less an individual than the intended Commandant of all the French Forces in China, and the frightful responsibility about to be entailed upon him by the governance of such a mighty host, probably contributed towards the cadaverous, Don Quixote-like appearance, for which "Monsieur Le Generale" was noted.

It was further observed of him, that he never smiled while looking in the face of a British subject, or exchanged ideas with others than his own countrymen; but this latter peculiarity was accounted for on the supposition

that he possessed not the gift of tongues. However, he was about to leave us, and rumour having it that he felt wounded by our seeming want of respect for his very exalted position, we determined on giving him an ovation; consequently, when his intended departure was announced, we mustered thickly at the gangway, and greeted him with unanimous and uproarious plaudits, waving our hats as wildly as we would have done for Queen Victoria.

An interchange of affectionate kisses, shared between himself and countrymen, kept the lean warrior's mustache on the bob for full five minutes, during which we nothing bated in our demonstration, and when, extricating himself at length from their farewell embraces, he stood alone on the gangway platform, we plunged into "Mourir pour la Patrie," with such happy confidence and strength of lungs (albeit the song was but imperfectly known to us, and villainously sung), that the old gentleman became perfectly electrified, and bowed to his knee caps over and

over again in acknowledgement of the compliment paid him. Even as he descended to his state barge (a little canoe with outriggers, navigated by *une nigger au nude*), his back might still be seen rising and falling like a porpoise's, nor until distance has massed his person into an indescribable lump, did he cease from occasional salutations, ever and anon beating the air with one of his arms like a signalising semaphore.

It was dark, without a star, when we steamed from Galle, and the buoys that indicate the channel being undistinguishable, boats with blazing torches were stationed in their vicinity, aided by whose light we moved along confidently as we would have done in the daytime.

We had cleared the outermost one, and I was leaning over the bulwark watching the white foam made by the vessel's progress as it danced and hissed along the "ways," and boiled round the prow of the pilot canoe in tow beside us, when a sudden bustle on the forecastle indicated

something had gone wrong; immediately afterwards I beheld first one dark object, and then a second, swimming for the canoe, followed by floating fragments of cargo, gleaming dimly gray on the black ground of water, and, finally, a third dark object, which being caught up by the canoemen, proved to be a human being in the last stage of exhaustion; this they laid stomach downward, athwart their narrow skiff, as though he had been a sack, his legs overhanging the sea on one side, his neck and arms drooping from the gunwale on the other, in which position he continued, motionless, as long as I saw him, occasional groans alone evidencing that life was not extinct.

It turned out we had run down a small Maldive trading vessel on her way to Point de Galle, whose crew, anticipating their fate, took to the water just before we passed over her. A couple succeeded in reaching the forecastle, and the canoe had rescued three, but a brace still remained to be accounted for, and it was sur-

mised that these, being good swimmers, with only a mile of water between them and the port, had struck out for the latter on finding the steamer overshoot them.

CHAPTER VI.

Coast of Ceylon—An adventure of olden time—Arrival at Madras—Mussoolah boats—Their eccentricities—A lady's departure and the solicitous mate—Wide gaps at our table—The poetical Padre—Enter the Hooghly—The swell pilot—Calcutta *hauteur*—An illustrious standard-bearer—Reflections on the Hooghly—An old Salt's information—From Kedgere to Garden Reach—Scenery—Something about Railroads—Indian houses and their associations with romance—Mr. Jock Mc Rawronnie and Giles Landlack—Leave the steamer in a hurry—Crow carousal—About palanquins and gharries—Drive to Spence's—His shop and a celebrity that haunts it.

AFTER getting well clear of "Galle," our course led along the east coast of Ceylon, which we did not lose sight of for a day and a night; but though forest-clothed hills and verdant slopes were easily distinguishable, as well as the celebrated land mark, known by the name of

"Westminster Abbey," from its resemblance to that edifice, we failed in detecting anything like the outlines of a town or habitation. On passing, however, that portion of the coast where Trincomalee *should* be, my memory took a leap backward, and reverted to a little incident of my younger days, which, before we bid farewell to the island (and Trincomalee is on its north-eastern extremity), I shall perhaps be excused for interpolating, more especially as it will tend to illustrate the revengeful character of the Cingalese under any slight provocation.

Many years ago, when serving in a man-of-war, I accompanied a couple of my messmates on shore at Trincomalee one morning for the purpose of shooting in the jungle. Monkeys and squirrels we saw in abundance, and more than one snake, but so few birds, that our sport, or rather lack of it, seemed likely to create considerable sport in another sense, in which we should figure as the game. Partly out of wantonness, and partly from a disinclination to

return empty handed, we indulged, while passing through a village, in a shot or two at some domesticated cocks and hens, but missed them, and this having put us quite out of conceit with ourselves, we "shouldered arms," and repaired to a small bamboo hut that had been pointed out to us as a "public," in hopes of procuring refreshment. Our host, a Chinaman, could offer us nothing better than a black loaf and some execrable arrack, neither of which we felt disposed to touch, and the habitation, in addition to its own discomfort, being defiled by the presence of two drunken artillerymen, we beat a retreat and were soon in the open air again, on our road to Trincomalee.

On our way to the "Jetty" (where we expected a boat), we espied through the windows of a gentleman's bungalow, a table ready spread for dinner; it was a tempting sight to fellows in our predicament, so getting under shelter of a wall we consulted as to the surest means of procuring an invitation. A plain statement of

our case must have opened the heart of any hospitable individual, but we were for different tactics; before, however, we had decided on any particular plan, a native servant emerged from the bungalow, and gleaning from him that his master bore a similar name to H. (the leader in this our frolic), H. determined to saddle him with relationship, and claim him as a brother.

"Present my compliments to your master," said he, addressing the man, "and say I should be glad to speak with him." The servant obeyed, and immediately afterwards we were all three ushered into the presence of a rather prominent-bellied, middle aged officer, clad in white jean, who seemed a little puzzled to make out what we could want with him at such a time. "I beg your pardon," said H., bowing, and introducing himself, "but hearing Captain H. lived here, and having a brother of that rank and name in the army, whose whereabout I have lost sight of lately, I thought you might

be the person; now, seeing my mistake, I have to apologise."

"Not at all, not at all," said the individual in white; "pray be seated, gentlemen," and we were all soon engaged in familiar conversation with him, and drinking his brandy, which we found excellent. A strong smell of boiled mutton and turnips began, in the mean time, to tickle our nostrils, giving notice of the proximity of dinner; but, alas for the uncertainty of human calculations! just as our imaginations were picturing hot slices of fat, juicy meat, flavoured by well seasoned vegetables, and washed down by "Bass's best," our host with the civilest smile in the world (sarcastic rogue!) excused himself for not asking us to dinner, as he was "quite unprepared for guests." The hint was too broad even for our empty stomachs, and wishing him good evening with very chapfallen countenances, we departed, nor broke our fast till we reached the ship, somewhat about 9 P.M.

On the following day, my two companions received an invitation to dine with the master attendant, and on their return to the ship in the evening, happening to pass through the village where we had fired at the poultry, they were suddenly set upon by several of the Cingalee inhabitants, who attacked them with hatchets and clubs. H. was dreadfully cut about the head, and his life despaired of for some days, and his comrade dangerously injured. Thus was our frolic nearly having a tragical termination.

But to resume the thread of more recent events. The fans of our steamer's swift revolving screw wriggled us, on the 6th of January, into the Madras Roads, where we swung to our anchor in the midst of a crowd of tossing ships, at a distance of about two miles from the shore, the long, level coast, with its white, flat-roofed houses, fort wall, and taper lighthouse, confronting us from behind a barrier of boiling surf, whose incessant roar was audible where we lay,

and murmured anything but sweet music in the ears of those destined to pass through it.

Numerous Mussoolah boats were soon alongside, and the hubbub their owners made as *we* pitched and rolled, and the *boats* pitched and rolled, and departing luggage hovered—now over a yawning wave, now came in furious contact with some drunken gunwale, ere descending with a crash and stand from under velocity into its appointed place—would have been awful but for its comicality.

Then, as soon as a lady's turn came to depart, what a galaxy of heads might be seen just above the meridian of the bulwark, watching the process. We will suppose madam to have descended five steps of the gangway ladder, when a sudden bump from the boat beneath jerks that sloping convenience a foot or more out of its proper angle of inclination, throwing the lady of course into the arms of the gallant mate or middy, deputed to see her to her husband below, who, with upturned head and

extended arms, himself in an agony of unsteadiness, is waiting her coming with tender solicitude and forked legs, at the edge of the boat, and who would rather not have seen her waist appropriated after that fashion by the gold-laced son of Neptune.

A half smothered scream, an incipient blush, and a musically-murmured "thank you," settle the *first* mishap, and bring her to the lower step, when—oh, horror!—just as her dainty foot is pointing for the boat's gunwale, a surge of the sea with a noisy *swash*, takes such unwarrantable liberties with the lower part of her person as to drown every feeling save that of abject terror, and she is all unconsciously snatched backward, and clutched once more in the embrace of the over-solicitous mate, to be consigned the next instant, by a rapid evolution of that worthy, into the arms of her lawfully wedded lord, who, more willing than wise, receives her with such nervous impetuosity that both disappear with Jack-in-the-box velocity at

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the bottom of the boat, the frothing up of the lady's crinoline, as they sink between the thwarts, indicating she is uppermost, which is the only certain conclusion lookers-on are able to arrive at, so intense appears the gloom in the depths of those curiously-constructed vessels.

There are wide gaps at our table now, for more than half of those who started with us from Suez have taken their departure, among them the poetical Padre, who had insinuated himself into our affections by various little social amenities. No clerical ascetic he, but a wholesome latitudinarian, well read in the diversity of Scriptural texts, and ever ready to balance one against the other. At pointing a moral or adorning a card-table he was equally felicitous, and leaned—worthy man—if anything, more to that verse of Holy Writ which enjoins the poor "to drink and forget their sorrows," than to any inculcating mortification of the flesh. Whether he had Indian experience to strengthen such conclusions I know not, but certainly he

was right as regards residents in Hindostan, the climate of that country enforcing physical tortures to an extent that precludes any necessity for self-inflicted ones.

On the evening of January the 9th, we saw the lights at the entrance of the Hooghly, and at daylight on the following morning (to the great delight of all) were boarded by the pilot, an individual very different in appearance to the bluff, rubicund, and pea-jacketted fraternity who chew quids and battle with the elements in the British Channel. Our gentleman luxuriated in a mustache that would have adorned any of "Cardigan's own," and in a beard worthy of a Hebrew, which, in combination with the gold-laced cap and figured brass buttons on a ground of blue, gave him a semi-military, semi-naval appearance, that would perhaps have been in bad taste, but for the epithet by which his class in Bengal is designated, to wit—*marines*, a term which both Johnson's Dictionary, and naval port reminiscences clearly define to mean

sea, or sailor-soldiers: he therefore only appeared in character, and was worthy of all respect notwithstanding Calcutta *hauteur*, which pretends to ignore the social position of Bengal marines, a proceeding that service need not take much to heart, considering the doubtful births, parentages, marriages, and antecedents generally of Anglo-Indian communities; if resented at all, a line of Shakespeare's will (slightly altered) suffice for the purpose,

> "That in the general *simply is absurd*,
> Which in the *ensign* is rank blasphemy."

Yet I remember, on one occasion, a gent of the latter *lofty rank* enlightening my ignorance not a little, by audibly calling to a brother sub. of his, who was manfully standing right in the track of an approaching pilot (as that rash individual advanced in his carriage up a well-known hotel avenue, unconscious of the illustrious animals so near his elbow), "Here, here, Clubfoot, stand back—quick, get behind the

door, or he'll see us—*he's the pilot who brought us up the river!*"

Poor pilot! had he only been aware of so dire a cut, or the existence even of that resplendent standard bearer—his feelings must have overpowered him, and in the anguish of his heart truly might he have cried, "*Et tu, Brute?*"

Poor Bengal marine! had you only stranded the steamer that contained that snob, he would (had the Hooghly not ingulfed him) have remembered you, and spoken of you too, till his hairs were gray: for it would have been an important history in his little mind—incomplete, unless you figured in it. So this muddy, rippling, and, to all appearance, bankless expanse of water, is the famed and mighty "Hooghly," out of which romance and poetry have woven so many legends, and down whose tides so many expiring victims have floated to the paradise of their hopes and superstitions. By jingo! how familiarity takes the gloss out of all and every-

thing! To bestride a rainbow is no easy matter, but once achieved, what a damper it would prove to the rider's idea of the beautiful! Well, well, "all that's bright must fade;" all but the sunshine, which, because its light hereabout is so terribly oppressive, "shines on and shines on by no shadow made tender."

With mud and glare in my eyes, and "Tom Cringle" and "Lalla Rookh" in my memory, great was my disappointment as we raced along; but, stop—a swarthy "old salt" at my elbow, of twenty years' experience in these parts (one of Tom Cringle's old shipmates may be), ejecting the juice of a well-chewed quid from his mouth, "axes my parding" for pointing out a lot of stunted trees and underwood just beginning to exhibit themselves on either side of us, and presuming "I shall take to sportin' like other 'Ingen gents' as he's know'd of," patronizingly informs me, "that there jungle's full of hogs, deer, and tigers, but them tigers is reg'lar Rooshans," adds Jack, "and if you go a shoot-

ing of deer there, mayhap you will pay dear for your pains."

As we approached "Kedgeree and Saugor Island," the prospect began to improve, and broad flats, sparsely sprinkled with habitations, gave token of our approach to the abodes of man. Near "Kedgeree" is a lighthouse known by the euphonious name of "Cow Colly," and on "Saugor Island" towers another, as well as a telegraph station, flanked by six long, thin, peculiar-looking trees, not unlike, length excepted, French dogs' tails placed on end, being shorn, to all appearance, two-thirds upwards. Boats, buried beneath huge stacks of hay, others roofed with ragged mats, and numerous ships, their white sails bellying to the breeze, now began to enliven the river, and some troops on board one of the latter, on their way to Calcutta to chastise the Pandies, cheered us lustily as we passed them. As we drew near "Diamond Harbour" (higher than which vessels of any burthen never ventured some few years

back), India's future was predicted in the shape of a railway station. All hail to thee, prophet of speed and improvement! Of the many lands which thou art destined to revolutionise, India most needs thy aid, and iron highways intersecting *her* soil will be a boon indeed; her fearful climate when thou art paramount will lose half its horrors, and the sun cease to count his slain by thousands more than the battle-field. The lingering dauk—who has not cursed it?—and the wretched bungalow by the wayside —poor substitute for an inn—will no longer exist to exhaust our purses and our patience and Christian civilization—none other is worthy of the name—trust to find sure footing in the land when thou hast conquered distance. Foster the project, good people of England, "much has been done, but more remains to do," and even Exeter Hall, that lavishes thousands yearly for the conversion of the Heathen, may find her schemes more readily carried out, and

reap profit into the bargain, by investing in railway shares as well as Bibles.

After clearing the point which terminates the neighbourhood of Diamond Harbour, we made a sharp turn to the right, altering our course from W. by S. to N.E. by N., and now the Hooghly began to assert its claim to the beautiful, improving rapidly as we moved upwards towards Garden Reach, where the botanical grounds on one side, and numerous villas, of palace-like dimensions, on the other, looked in the setting sun as lovely as a sylvan poet could wish or imagine.

Space, which is all in all here, as its opposite is at home, makes one of the great charms of Indian scenery and social position. When did romance ever assimilate with a parlour twelve feet by twelve, or overshadow a "Mark Lane" wide flower garden? No; romance is human vicissitude on a large scale, and requires space to breathe in. As I gaze on those massive mansions so profuse in windows, and those spreading

lawns with wide carriage sweeps, Mr. Jock McRawronnie (who I am informed resides in one of them), a mighty man, they say, in the eyes of Marines, and who I have a hazy recollection of having known in auld Aberdeen, lang syne, as the shock-headed son of a twenty acred tenant farmer, is no longer the grubby boy of my remembrance, on whom it was flattering to bestow a baubee, but a nabob, at whose table rajahs condescend to tiff, and, as such, unapproachable on terms of equality by a Giles Landlack, his playmate in early days, but now "without the covenant." Consequently, Mc Rawronnie (I beg his pardon, Mr.) is not informed by special messenger of my arrival, and thus escapes a torture similar to that inflicted on General Dashwood when made acquainted with the advent of Miss Maginn.

As Calcutta generally fills about January, I was anxious to land with as little delay as possible, and took advantage of the steamer stopping her engine to hurry off with a companion in a

"dinghee" which hovered near us; tumbling our boxes over the side, we slipped quietly away, and being now sufficiently on a level with the river to notice little things, my curiosity was attracted by more than one group of crows, who swept merrily down the tide without wetting a feather or submerging a claw, and seemed highly to enjoy their aquatic excursion, digging their beaks with great glee and rapidity every now and then into what appeared the water, until drawing near to them, we discovered they were canoeing it on the dead bodies of blessed Hindoos, and making their meals off the carcasses at the same time.

I certainly would rather swear by the water of the Ganges, than drink of it!

Palanquins have gone out of fashion, and though numerous enough, are not got up as they *were* got up in the good old days of "Jehan Coompanee Bahadoor." Gharrys, which are their counterparts on wheels, but larger, and fitted with raised seats at either end, and a box

well in the centre, have usurped their places in a great measure, and horses, instead of men, now bear the heat and burthen of travel, palanquins being only used for short distances, and seldom for these by the more respectable classes. But sorry hacks are the gharry ones—skeleton horses for the most part, on whose hips you might hang a hat with the greatest security, and in the cavities adjacent stow away your bandboxes; animals, in short, that, in England, could claim the benefit of the *Act Martin*, with small danger of the rule being refused.

The driver of one of these conveyances, a long, greasy-haired, scampish-looking native, with an upper garment, but no breeches, took possession of us on landing for the consideration of a rupee, and piling our boxes on the roof of his vehicle, drove away with such dignity as rope harness and battered paintwork permitted towards Spence's Hotel, traversing the Strand through its entire length, at that critical hour when Calcutta fashionables endeavour to reno-

vate their livers and give an impetus to the blood by spinning at a terrific pace in carriages, buggys, and on horseback, round and round a circle of several miles, which I trust more fully to describe hereafter.

We were barely in time, one bed-room only being vacant; but this having a range of thirty feet, could easily accommodate two persons; so ordering our kit to follow, we took possession, and set about making ourselves comfortable.

All Calcutta men know the shop at Spence's; a highly convenient shop it is, wherein one may procure a glass of iced water for thanks, and an unlimited amount of any other beverage by simply scribbling one's name in a book superintended by a snowy-apparelled Babboo, and deferentially handed to visiters by kitmutgars in red turbans. In that shop, bordered by glass-cases full of French gimcracks, and hung round with mirrors—with punkahs swinging overhead pulled by darkies in naked majesty arrayed (barring their langooties)—and begirt by every

possible edible, from Cayenne lozenges up to Westphalia hams, men, without distinction of rank, may (*and do*) smoke their cigars, and grumble at the Governor-General over the way, from nine in the morning to nine at night.

All men know that shop; but there are some "Verdant Greens"—let us hope they are few in number—who do not know a celebrity that haunts it as a shadow its substance; a tall, gaunt man from a realm west of the Atlantic, with whiskers more pointed than his wit, but considerably shorter than his tongue, who may, or may not, be special correspondent for the chief paper of the chief city of that western realm, but who decidedly *is* a legitimate representative of that realm's roughs. Were it not for his imperturbable good temper and philanthropic cast of mind, visitors might wish that he kept more "shady;" but these redeeming qualities, added to the fact of his inciting to virtue while uttering foolishness, by driving from the

bottle to their buggies men who, but for his loquacity, might prolong their libations to the detriment of sobriety, are reasons why his presence—like boils on the skin—should be considered a welcome infliction, as preventing a great evil by the imposition of a small one.

In this shop, listening to the wild extravagances of the above individual, and gazing on the Calcutta fair as they drove up in rapid succession to the door for refreshments, after their circular airing, we killed time on the evening of our arrival.

CHAPTER VII.

Anglo-Indian hotels—How Spence's is conducted—The Men to be met there—Cliqueism in Calcutta—Killing time in ditto—Newspaper type-suckers—Comparison between British and Indian bed-rooms—Calcutta Crows—Morning walks—Cold season and its pastimes.

ANGLO-INDIAN hotels, thirty years ago, were not in existence, a few low drinking taverns being the nearest approach to them that the country could boast; and respectable persons arriving from Europe in those days either accepted the hospitality of friends, or were accommodated with quarters by Government. Creepingly progressive, when other lands are startling us by the *rapidity* of their advance, the capital of British India, rather vaingloriously styled "the City of Palaces," has so far shaken

off her lethargy as to possess at the present time two first class hotels, and three inferior ones, and "Brown late Spence," from its position, size, and general conveniences, stands *princeps in dignitas* of the five.

The system on which it is conducted differs from the English system in so far as it is obligatory on each inmate to procure his own servant, and *caste* preventing menials from following more than one occupation, it may be necessary, if comfort is a *sine quâ non*, to maintain a kitmutgar, bearer, and punkah wallah, the first to wait at table, the second to arrange the apartment, and the third to fan you night and day. As regards subsistence, everything is lumped, and the charges per month and week made familiar by printed handbills, framed, glazed, and hung up in all parts of the building. Married people, by taking a suite of apartments, live as privately as they would do in their own houses, and bachelors sit down to a *table d'hôte*, which becomes a lively affair on the eve of

mail boats arriving or departing. The place where it is held is a spacious, lofty, and paved hall, opening on three sides by a succession of long French windows; huge punkahs and numerous lamps depend from its ceiling, and large engravings decorate its otherwise bald stucco walls. A library and reading-room, in which are to be found most of the English and Indian serials and newspapers, flanks its fourth side, and beyond that again lies a billiard-room for the convenience of inmates, where the crack of balls may be heard late and early, shot by many who have practiced with far different ones on the red fields of Hindostan.

To the imaginative man, the *table d'hôte* at Spence's affords a fine field for conjecture—at it may be seen travelled individuals of all ranks and ages, from the girlish-faced cadet to the battered and bronzed general officer, intermixed with railway debutants, commercial men, and lawyers, all on the active lists of their several departments, and many with whom an hour's

conversation would reveal strange vicissitudes by "flood and field." To some, China, Australia, Burmah and the Brazils, the tobacco growing Phillipines, and sunny Malacca Straits, are familiar as "household words," and European travel has enlightened the leisure of others; while the youngest can boast more or less of an acquaintance with the mysteries of ocean, and have seen nature exhibited in a foreign garb. This rollicking youngster, so partial to iced beer and so eloquent on horseflesh, is one who ran the gauntlet of a crowd of mutineers at Delhi, and the pock-pitted youth by his side, with gold studded shirt sleeves, the pioneer of that gallant army, who, under Sir James Outram, rescued the heroic defenders of Lucknow. Our friend at the table top, with unkempt beard and restless bearing, carried the first news to England of the termination of that eventful siege, and yonder red-faced veteran with only one eye, but that a blazer, swearing so roundly at his kitmutgar, is General ——, K.C.B.,

who if not possessed of Havelock's fame, was his rival in dash and daring. Even the English steward, as he lounges from chair to chair with the nonchalance of a cosmopolite, claims our interest, for he has fought by land and sea, visited each quarter of the globe, and kissed the Queen as a baby.

Many more are there to be found scattered up and down that table at intervals of time, who in their own persons have become subjects of history, or bear the names of illustrious Indian sires. Comers and goers, Queen's and Company's men, frank and friendly with all around them, and entertaining for their obscurer companions a sympathy which has its origin in the talismanic word country, for in India, Europeans of pure blood, are, if not the aristocracy of the soil, a privileged class, and however differently situated in point of position towards each other, constitute, as compared with the heathen, a distinct species, whence springs their bond of union.

But that union must not be mistaken for a social one in the French sense of the term. Cliqueism in Calcutta is as prevalent as in any English country town, and the bitterness engendered by it appears in no way on the decline. I have seen military men and civilians conduct themselves with friendly familiarity towards uncovenanted fellow residents under the common roof-tree, who would resort to the shallowest artifices for the purpose of evading their society in public. If two-thirds of these individuals bore in mind their antecedents, the self-relying classes would have less cause for contempt, while the "Services" might culminate to good manners through humility. A man may possess gentlemanly ideas, and understand the euphemisms of speech, without wearing a scarlet coat or luxuriating in red tape, and the day has gone by when fine feathers were the test of respectability.

But it is to the fountain head we must look for a remedy, and while the Governor-General

ignores the non-official classes, it is not to be wondered at if lesser fry lift their legs contumaciously and crow on their own dunghills.

To kill time in Calcutta is a difficult matter. Physical exertion beyond a walk or ride at dawn of day, and another after sunset, is the utmost a man can pledge himself to, and unless he has office work, the hours hang heavily on his hands. As a consequence, the daily papers, meagre though they be and wanting in dash, are much in request; and some individuals make a meal of them to the great disgust of hungry expectants. Hotels have always a few of these type-suckers, and they may be known in India by certain methodical peculiarities which characterise the tribe: for instance, their chairs are invariably to be seen adjusted with an eye to cosiness of attitude, being so placed as to admit of the sitter's backbone curving gently to its base without cramping his legs, which must repose, folded one over the other, on a convenient angle of the table, or rest, by

correctly calculated distance, against some moulding of the wall; then on go the type-sucker's spectacles, if he happen to be short-sighted, and carefully smoothing the wrinkles out of his paper, he commences his intellectual breakfast, which is seldom completed under an hour.

It is the 11th of January. I have passed one night in Calcutta at a Calcutta hotel, and thirty-eight days ago precisely, I took my departure from a Southampton one—to wit, "Radley's:" let us compare notes, reader.

British Bedroom.—Fourteen feet each way, lighted by one small window, none the clearer for a dressing-table across it, and looking on a stable yard and stacks of house tops; enveloped in fog drizzle.

Indian Bedroom.—Thirty feet by thirty, aired by two windows ten feet deep, each wide enough to admit a buggy, and confronted by a quadrangle of balustraded flats, and a sky of cloudless azure.

British Bedroom.—Carpetted—papered—disfigured by a black fire grate—furnished with a massive four poster, more possesive than prepossessing—and a foot pan and basin, most obnoxious to commenders of the Bath.

Indian Bedroom.—White painted walls, and Benha matted floor, occupied by a musquito-curtained bedstead, above which oscillates a lengthy punkah—and opening on a bath room twelve feet square, wherein a spacious tub, filled daily by Bestys, or water carriers, enables defiled humanity to purify the flesh without mortifying the spirit, or pottering over the laws of gradation.

So far, so good: India has the advantage, but oh, the pretty chamber-maids! where are they? The black imps of male heathenism, stealing in with some necessary adjunct, resemble them only in noiselessness of tread; no musically-murmured "good morning" from cherry lips comes as a salve to hot coppers; no half bashful, half saucy glance, from beauty's sparkling eyes,

drives away the fogs of an uneasy slumber. The langootied mehter, with rattan broom, bowing to the ground as he catches your eye, when on the point of lifting an unmentionable utensil from beneath your bedstead, only creates disgust; and the coffee, proffered you by your kitmutgar, would taste far better flavoured if presented by female fingers.

That nursery rhyme, "early to bed and early to rise," has taken deep root in the minds of Calcutta citizens, as a stroll, any morning, along the "Maidan" will prove, or a "devil on two sticks" visit to houses, after the stroke of 10 P.M. With the first glimpse of daylight are to be seen men on horseback, and women in chariots, and pedestrians, with turbaned bound hats, breasting the foglike dews, as they lift obedient to the rising sun, veiling the landscape as they mount heavenward, till only the buffaloes feeding in one's path are discernible, with their attendant crows, who seem to be on the most intimate terms with those sacred animals, if we

may judge by the unconcerned way in which they light on their humps and buttocks, digging into their hides without causing any apparent inconvenience to the animals, who browse on with imperturbable gravity, whisking their tails no oftener than is usual with the species, under ordinary circumstances.

By the way, Calcutta crows, in impudence and drollery, surpass all crows of my acquaintance. The arch way in which they survey everything that falls within the scope of their vision, from a beef bone up to a human being, is highly diverting and expressive; it says, as plainly as bird pantomime can, "What are you worth, and how may I best double on you?" Then they are so sleek in form, and so faultless of feather, as if the ills of crow life were unknown to them, which, indeed, seems to be the case, as far as human interference is concerned, for they have unlimited licence to do as they please in the open, and act up to the letter of their privileges, by occasionally pouncing on the

well-filled plates in daily transit across Spence's yard, the kitmutgar bearers of the same rarely resenting the outrage beyond uttering a curse in Bengalee, which language the crows being ignorant of, treat with stoical indifference, or a contemptuous "caw, caw." Though seemingly the merriest of the feathered tribe, they are without taste or discernment, and will regale on the entrails of a rat, or a quill out of one of their own tails, with equal gusto. They may be seen at all times perched on the pilaster tops, window sills, and abutments of the building, their beaks open in hot weather to catch the scanty breeze, and always on the best terms with each other, and with the kites and minas, who patronise Spence's occasionally, and condescend to share a crumb with them; the latter birds, with their slender yellow legs and saffron coloured bills, looking as graceful as the crow does comical.

The morning pedestrian who wishes for something to diversify his promenade, should strike

off from the secretary's walk on the Maidan, (which at early day is only resorted to by ayahs, children, and a few loungers like himself) for the "Strand," in the direction of the Eden gardens; his eyes will then be gratified, not only by the sight of innumerable ships, and the constant flitting to and fro of busy dinghees, but he will see the whole shore lined with natives, in all varieties of costume, from the portly, muslin-clad "Babboo," to the all but naked coolie. He will see, as at a fair, every kind of native sweet-meat and granulary edible exposed for sale, and he will see (what perhaps will gratify him more than all, if he happen to be on the sunny side of life) crowds of Hindu females purifying their dusky charms in the impure waters of the Hooghly, or emerging from it with their too transparent garments clinging, in all the agony of moisture, to their not very Venus-like moulded limbs; noisy, of course—all of them—but none of them exhibiting that bashful confusion which so heightens enchantment in the

enchanting; children, exuberant of corporation, and men, whose shrunken shanks and calfless lower legs testify to the balefulness of sitting on one's hams, share their ablutions; th latter cleansing, at the same time, the filthy rags with which they encircle their haunches on terra firma, in unwilling obedience to the demands of modesty.

My first walk in the neighbourhood recommended above, afforded me a view more common than pleasing to ramblers along the Hooghly's banks: reaching a grassy mound that commanded on extensive view of the river, and on whose top stands a little dome-crowned temple,* I beheld tossing up and down in the eddy at its base, the naked corpse of a female. The body had the whiteness of an European one, and for such I mistook it, till, curiosity tempting me to the water's edge, I discovered by the shape

* The Gwallior monument, vulgarly called the "pepper box." Its dome is cast from cannon taken in the Gwallior campaign.

of the mouth and nose that it was Hindu, bleached by time and submersion. Native boats were moored within a few feet of it, and half a dozen native loungers smoking their hookahs on the raised ground adjacent, gave it no more heed than Londoners would have given to the dead body of a cat, so differently is human life estimated in different countries.

The *cold season* (as Calcutta worthies term December, January, and February) corresponds, between sunrise and sunset, with the temperature of an English summer, and one may then venture abroad in the daytime without fear of a *coup de soleil;* but beyond that exemption, I think there is nothing to justify the term. Still, as everything goes by comparison, male residents don their woollens, and ladies (I beg the sex's pardon if I am wrong) their flannel petticoats. Dancing, too, becomes a legitimate pastime, and invitations from "big wigs" gladden the hearts of Terpsichore's votaries.

We will suppose His Excellency the Viceroy,

Governor-General in Council, &c. has just returned to his town residence. A day is notified when he will receive the congratulations of well-disposed men on his safe arrival; and Spence's windows, commanding a full view of the "great house," down sits an unconcerned spectator to watch proceedings. Eight strokes of a melancholy-voiced bell, from St. John's steeple, succeeded by the deep bass of a second, solemnly tolling the hour of ten, usher in the spectacle.

A regiment of infantry, two deep, their bayonets glittering in the sun, and the lappets of their white shackos agitated by the breeze, line the spacious carriage drive, fronting the grand entrance to Government House, whose steps (a goodly row, and vasty wide withal) are bordered by "Beef eaters" in crimson frocks arrayed. Then, at a pace that paralyzes the palkee bearers of humble levee-goers, up dash carriages, buggys, and gharrys, disgorging beings in all varieties of glittering costume, who treadmill it up those steps, and down again, in a continuous

stream, for an hour or more, and the curtain falls on the first act of the drama.

There is a long interval, during which the audience, in lieu of refreshing themselves with "oranges, lemonade, ginger beer," &c., as at [illegible] theatres, partake of luncheon, drive round the Maidan, and dine; then, once more, the curtain rises, and night, with all her host of stars, is seen, where late was garish day; hundreds of lamps flash in double lines along the path that was occupied by soldiers in the morning, and up those steps, and from every window of the vice-regal dwelling, glitter others still more resplendent, impressing one's mind with the idea that some ambitious mortal had planned an astral heaven below that should snuff out legitimate stars. Broad avenues once again echo with the whirl of wheels and the hoof-tramp of horses; and, pouring into richly decorated saloons, "through halls of dazzling light," appear anew the bedizened actors of the forenoon, but accompanied, this time, by fairy forms, in gauze

apparel, radiant with gold and gems. On a sudden, ravishing music bursts from a crowded orchestra, and, with white bosoms heaving, "soft eyes looking love to eyes that speak again," and form entwining form, the Governor's ball commences.

By two or three in the morning silence succeeds revel, and the Calcutta world is left to darkness and to sleep, omitting of course a few fast men, who, on reaching their quarters, criticise, over brandy and cigars, in the delightful abandonment of muslin pajamas, all and everything pertaining to His Excellency's establishment; the ladies holding a prominent place in the intellectual travesties of these oracular and taste-gifted young gentlemen.

It is in the *cold* season, too, that most of the fancy fairs are held, and the flower and vegetable shows, and (chief attractions to the male community) the Presidency races: these last come off in the morning, and are over before breakfast time. The grand stand is open to all

without destinction of skins, and is consequently patronised by fewer ladies than blacklegs: by the latter term do not imagine anything derogatory to gentlemen of the Calcutta turf—they may be, and no doubt *are*, "all honourable men"—some of them *right* honourable. I simply allude to the large sprinkling of dusky understandings usually visible among the white pantaloons scattered over that exalted region of treacherous stucco. Hindus love everything in the shape of a "tamasha," and some of their "bloods" come out on these occasions in costumes that seem to have been copied from the Adelphi or Haymarket Theatres, on Oriental pantomime nights; scull caps, glittering with spangles, and tight frocks shot with gold thread; beneath which figure trousers of genuine European cut, strained over Wellington boots of the same. We may set them down as Asiatic Count D'Orsays, who have travelled in Europe, and are bent on astonishing the natives, by showing their contempt for conventionalities.

CHAPTER VIII.

Town-hall—Stars who have figured there—European lethargy—Statues—State of the city—Hindu laziness—An Indian day early and an Indian day late—Gharry wallahs and adventure of a Jack—Best refuge for pedestrian respectability—Description of the Eden gardens—Darkness of the nights—Ludicrous mistake arising therefrom.

THE Town-hall, an edifice remarkable for its chaste simplicity, is the place usually selected for in-door public amusements, which its principal chamber (situated on the first-floor, and embracing the whole length of the building) admirably adapts it for. Here English stars, of various magnitudes, have strained their throats in anticipation of rupees, rarely realised; and less ambitious artistes practised legerdemain, with small advantage to their ledgers *de l'argent*. Not that the Calcutta public are close-fisted or

over fastidious, but only lethargic; and to give them an appetite *à la gourmande*, very strong stimulants indeed are necessary. Nothing, for instance, under Cayenne pepper and curry powder for the digestive organs, and gunpowder for the energies. Yea, I half incline to the opinion that but for the shameful atrocities perpetrated during the late mutiny, that catastrophe would be considered a pleasant reminiscence by them, and the possibility of a second spectacle (equally as exciting) an event devoutly to be wished. They may be compared to the hero of the play in *Used Up*, who never feels his blood tingle, or his nerves on the string, till an iron clutch embarrasses his windpipe; *then* he discovers exertion isn't altogether "a bore," and having to fly for supposed manslaughter, the exercise entailed upon him makes his gastric juices—before so fastidious—wonderfully susceptible to the charms of bread and cheese.

Fronting the Town-hall is a bronze statue (by Westmacott) of Lord William Cavendish

Bentick, on a circular granite pedestal, semi-faced with bronze Hindu figures in *alto relievo*. Not amiss as a work of art, but melancholy to look upon nevertheless, owing to the utter want of cleanliness in his lordship, who is generally to be seen streaked from head to foot with bird-lime and mud coagulations, and whose metal locks seem especially devised for crows and kites to peck at, one or more of these libidinous birds never failing to perch on and tamper with the crown of his ex-Excellency, giving him from a distance (where the birds look for all the world like helmet crests) the appearance of a Roman warrior or heavy dragoon.

Calcutta boasts various other *mementos mori* of illustrious Anglo-Indians, her *chef-d'œuvre* being an equestrian statue of Lord Hardinge; but all suffer in common with Cavendish Bentick from the indignities heaped upon them by the feathered tribe, and would be greatly benefitted by a local *order of the bath*, whose

insignia should be, soap on a scrubbing brush of hog's bristles.

Alas! as with Calcutta statues, so is it with all her public appurtenances: the city remains undrained, notwithstanding its draining apparatus. The river reeks like any charnel house. Gas is but partially adopted (so partially as hardly to merit notice), and hovels disfigure her choicest streets. Then so dilatory are all undertakings, when improvements or renovations *have* been determined on, one almost wishes the good abandoned. The Secretary's Walk measures about half a mile in length, and is thirty feet wide, a space which two English gardeners would weed in a day; ten natives set to work upon it during one of my morning rambles, and at the expiration of a fortnight had completed their labours. In a like ratio proceed all their undertakings, nor can the evil be remedied till the "Ethiop change his skin," and that will never be; climate and humanity alike forbid it. To colonise India from the

West would be to commit premeditated murder, if by colonisation is meant the encouragement of English *labour* as well as capital. Sunstroke and fever are ruthless assassins, and need small bidding to choke the breath. We have conquered India by the sword, by the sword we must retain it, leaving to natives the *toil* of trade and husbandry, and beyond such improvements as Europeans can bring about through instruction and surveillance, there is small hope for tropical Hindostan. True, time and patience may change the Ethiop's soul, if not his skin, and then—the Millennium will obviate all further anxiety.

But I am growing disquisitious, when my aim is simply to describe; so, by your leave, reader, I will endeavour with the aid of my mental spectacles to picture an Indian day.

"Light is heat," say the Qui Hihs, who seldom indulge in moonshine reveries, and acting on the assertion, an hour or so before the sun reaches his meridian height, they prepare to

exclude his ardent beams, by closing the Jhilmils (Venetian blinds) of their many windowed mansions, till each room is wrapped in profound gloom, and an indigo green tint pervades all the establishment; then, wives and daughters retiring to their domiciles, unrobe, and reclining on couches under ever moving punkahs, criminally abandon themselves to the arms of Morpheus, or resist his seductions only through the persuasive agency of some last new novel. The menials of the establishment likewise unrobe, save in the vicinity of the loins, and doubling themselves up on stair landings, or in obscure lobbies, indulge in such slumbers, or scratching recreations, as their unoccupied time permits of. The Durwan sits idly in the doorway, admiring his papooshes, or scribbling verses from the Shasters on dried slips of palm leaf, with an iron pen dipped in poisoned ink, and silence profound, but for the cawing of ubiquitous crows, or the buzzings of blood-thirsting musquitos, pervades the Anglo-Indian's home; for

the sahib is at his office, or if an idler in his sanctum, killing time probably with a Manilla cheroot, the only substitute for the thousand and one allurements to activity so common in London, but unknown in the city of palaces, which during the full glow of sunshine is for Europeans little better than a city of the dead.

But no sooner does that luminary show a disposition to retreat behind the ramparts of Fort William, than the Feringhee world, shaking off its forced lethargy, proceeds, by unanimous action, to demonstrate its delight at the day king's abdication. Every spring-balanced vehicle that Calcutta can boast, and every manageable steed, are instantly in request; and soon the spacious roads, encircling the Maidan and Eden gardens, are crowded with carriages and horsemen, racing along as if their lives depended upon speed, and speed only. Tail on end go equestrians, like so many John Gilpins, and carriage wheels spin as if whirled upon ice. Woe betide the unfortunate pedestrian who

rashly ventures to cross their orbits; he may experience that the proverb of a "beggar on horseback" is no idle saying. "Hi, hi!" will shout the dirtiest gharree wallah, who sees such an individual in his path—*canaille* in his estimation, for whom it would be *infra dig.* to slacken speed.

Sometimes, however, a rollicking Jack, half seas over, nimble by profession, and experienced in calculating close shaves, will, in defiance of "hi, hihs," and swift advancing shafts, steer right among the enemy's fleet, keeping his ship so well in hand as to beat Indian Jehus on their own ground.

I once witnessed a curious feat of this kind, in the neighbourhood of Chowringhee: on came a ticca (hired) gharree, at its usual lordly speed, till one or other of its shafts seemed in a fair way of penetrating the ribs of a roving tar, who, no way flurried by its approach, watched his opportunity, and just as a catastrophe *might* have taken place, by a dexterous twist avoided the

danger; the next instant his feet were on the shaft, to which he had sprung by a grasp at the harness, and the driving box being now easily comeatable, Jehu's late contemptuous "hi! hi!" was speedily changed to a dolorous "wah! wah!" by the sailor's bunch of fives, which beat a tattoo on his carcase that astonished the insiders, who, before they could interfere, saw Jack under full sail, in the act of turning a corner.

These fellows are the especial dread of palke bearers, who shout warningly to each other, and rush on one side, like so many sheep at the bark of a dog, when the sound of wheels is in their rear.

The best refuge for pedestrian respectability, when all the world seems riding the high horse, is the "Eden gardens," especially on band nights, as then some individuals *do* condescend to tread the soil, who can boast, like *Punch's* costermonger, of keeping their "hown hanimals;" the charms of military music being sufficiently powerful to check their racing furor for a time,

and bring their vehicles to a dead lock in the road encircling that Calcutta Paradise; when crinoline Venuses and kid-gloved Cupids—folding their wings—descend and mingle with the common herd, which comprises ayahs, ugly to look at; kitmutgars; oily babboos, smelling like gheedhubburs; Parsee merchants; jews; and policemen; with a sprinkling of graceful, joyous European children, whose little legs, on the circular stone platform appropriated to musicians, are ever practising jigs and polkas of their own invention; or flickering, butterfly-like, in snowy socks and braided drawers, among the green foliage and glowing flowers; the joyous laughter and lisping words of their owners not less musical than the strains breathed from the brazen instruments that attract thither old and young.

It would be like comparing a Shetland pony with a through-bred racehorse, to place the Eden garden (named, by the way, after a young lady, not after the home of our first parents) on

a par with those of Kensington or Cremorne; still, it has distinctive beauties of its own that justifies rivalry, and it makes up for smallness by the expanse discernible beyond its railing, the broad, grassy Maidan encompassing it on three sides, whose *coup d'œil* embraces Government House, Fort William, the far-off cathedral, and the best portion of Calcutta; while its fourth side is swept by the racing Hooghly, with its jungle-clothed western shore, its crowd of shipping, and its many graceful native boats; and when its flowering trees, at present little better than saplings, attain maturity, it bids fair to exhibit, in a small compass, a floral brilliancy unattainable by our own pet gardens, save on horticultural fête days.

As a pleasure-ground it has little to boast of, a small lattice work pavilion, open to the public on band nights, being the only covered resort for "thirsty souls and weary;" pleasant, however, it is to see, when lamps are gleaming, and fire-flies flit among the night-massed foliage,

groups of bearded bacchanals ranged round the little marble tables of that sylvan pothouse, smoking their Havannahs, or gossiping over their varied experiences in the "wide, wide world," till the solemn and majestic strains of "God save the Queen," warn them it is time to mount their steeds, or pick up their buggy reins, and depart for dinner. Off they start at the signal, and lingerers on the Secretary's Walk, at that juncture, may witness a curious spectacle in the darkness. Calcutta, from that point of view, will look like a vast circle of stationary lamps, having within it a smaller circle of revolving ones, as returning vehicles, with their two lamps each, and running one behind the other, traverse anew those curving roads, hid, like the town, in ebon gloom, even when under a cloudless sky.

This intense darkness on starry nights seems peculiar to Calcutta, and has puzzled me not a little to account for; I am not short-sighted, and have tracked an Australian forest path at

very late hours; but hang me (with body bent like the boy's who makes a back at leap frog) if I have not often mistaken the shadow cast by a lamp-post, in Calcutta, for a gully or a mud streak; and I once begged pardon of a buffalo for inadvertently thrusting the point of my stick into his ribs, under the impression that it was a man I addressed, and had assaulted, till a sudden plunge, and the whisk of a tail across my nose, enlightened my visual and mental sight, and cleared up the mystery.

CHAPTER IX.

Calcutta Sundays—Native disregard of them—Punkahs and fans—Spiritual shortcomings—Sunday resorts—Botanical garden—Banyan tree—A dream and a song—Best way to reach the gardens—Sath Talab—Sentries and ginger-pop—Tame fishes—Sham Churn's upholstery—An unique—Pictures—Garden conveniences—A rhinoceros and a monkey—Concluding remarks.

SUNDAYS in Calcutta resemble English Sundays in *dulness*, but there all parallel ceases. The Sabbath of the Christian is neither a sacred day nor a holiday with the Hindu community, and though European offices are closed, the native population pursue, uninterruptedly, their mercantile avocations.

Lumbering hackeries, drawn by buffaloes, whose tails serve for reins, traverse the streets

then as on week-days, with their various loads, disturbing one's pious cogitations, and setting one's teeth on edge by a creaking of wheels only comparable to the caterwauling of libidinous cats, or bagpipes in a state of rupture.

In the bazaars may be seen silk dealers unravelling their skeins, and Boriya wallahs platting their mats; the papoosh maker busy with his last, and the confectioner weighing out his pice worth of mithàee to sweet-toothed customers; all, in short (save Christians), occupied with their temporal concerns and sacrificing to Mammon.

Emerging from the haunts of the Heathen, we come on churches legitimately spired, and orthodox to the letter in the tolling of their bells, policemen (European and native) watching the entrances, but no humble loiterers, as at home, are there, in antiquated coats and Saturday night blacked boots, to complete the English picture.

Again, in England, *carriage* church-goers

make the exception, here they are the rule, and the crush of vehicles, and tier upon tier of palanquins covering the consecrated sward, remind one of an opera night in the height of the season, or a levee day at St. James's.

We enter the sacred portals, moist of skin, notwithstanding our freedom from exertion, and without surreptitiously propitiating the pew-opener, are shown at once to a seat in the gallery or body of the church, as taste suggests: a right pleasant seat, too, a comfortable arm-chair, on which no one can encroach—beyond which we can encroach on no one. The pews are simple railings, six chairs, as a general rule, being allotted to each, those reserved for the big wigs having crimson coverings. The Jhilmils are all closed to subdue the light, and from the lofty roof, suspended by long canvass-sheathed cords, hank a forest of punkahs, whose uniform pendulous motion neutralizes an atmosphere that would be otherwise unbearable. Their novelty soon wears off, but they have a *striking* appear-

ance at all times, as men above regulation height can testify, many of whom make more bows on their account during the standing portions of divine service than is orthodox even in Puseyite churches; while others, too stiff-necked for that, sit when they should stand, through fear of having their Evangelical consistency compromised by forced obeisances.

The ladies (albeit clad in gauze that looks as Zephyrus airy—gauze, whose transparency attracts many a voluptuous glance) are not satisfied with the draughts produced by the punkahs, but, in addition, flourish each a fan, so that what with see-sawings overhead, the tossing of bonnet ribbons, and little hands never still, the church is kept in one continual flutter from the opening "I will arise," to the final benediction.

That tropical heat is an excuse for spiritual short-comings, the clergy of Calcutta themselves allow, by ignoring, every alternate Sunday, either the Litany or Communion Services,

and as I am not aware that this unorthodox proceeding has been protested against by any of them, a revision of the Prayer Book will, of course, meet with their full concurrence when it shall please Her Majesty and the bench of Bishops to bring it about.

There are two Sunday resorts for Calcutta cocknies, viz., the "Botanical Gardens" and the "Seven Tanks." The first is situated on the banks of the Hooghly, at "Garden Reach," and is largely frequented during the cold season. It is well kept, and irrespective of its merits as lounging-place, has much to interest the scientific explorer. Its flowering trees, such as the *amhersta nobilis*, with drooping red petals not unlike those of the fuchsia; the russock tree, whose flower resembles the honeysuckle in shape though not in colour; the *roupellia grata*, of snow-white bloom, and others, were they its sole attractions, would be sufficient to recommend it, and a gigantic banyan, whose outside

area measures over six hundred feet, is another of its trophies well worthy of inspection.

When first I saw this Sylvan temple, and (overpowered by the heat of the day) threw myself under its broad shadow, I thought to myself what scope it presented for a monster merry-making. A cigar was my solè companion at the time, and I might have been puffing it for the space of fifteen minutes or so, when my attention became suddenly attracted by an unusual brilliancy observable among the many columns surrounding me, a brilliancy I had not before noticed. Could it be the sun that had caused this change? Certainly not, for the shadow of the tree swept far beyond its pillars: to my intense surprise, and, I may add, awe, wreaths of beautiful flowers as I gazed gradually entwined themselves round those lordly stems, centrically held together as they wound upwards by serpents, with skins as brilliant as their floral burthens; anon, these wreaths grew spangled with millions of fire-flies, and soon the

whole shadowy space under the banyan sparkled in like manner with the flittings to and fro of similar luminous insects, giving the atmosphere beneath the tree an appearance like that of ocean, mailed in broken glints of sunshine. I grew pale with surprise and breathed hurriedly, for though climates have their peculiar phantasmagoria, I was unprepared for this; but my astonishment increased, when, amid laughter musical but not familiar, down from the many boughs, on wings of crystal clearness, swam forms lovelier than the loveliest of Eve's fair daughters, who, on touching the sward, formed in twos and threes, and, to the harmony of bird music, commenced winding in mazy circles round a hideous figure of gigantic proportions that had intruded on the scene I know not how. But for his presence I might have recovered my self-possession and ventured into the magic circle, for if I have a weakness that prompts to audacity, it is a passion for female charms; but the hirsute and cloven hoofed lower part of the

late arrival, coupled with his hideous nose, that had the flatness without the beauty of a Victoria Regina, caused me to tremble in every limb, and my chief thought was how to escape detection, yet, like Tam O'Shanter, witness the fun, for I now began to comprehend my position, viz., that I stood on enchanted ground, of which not even the nineteenth century has entirely deprived the universe. Sheltering myself as well as I could behind an intervening trunk, I soon perceived that the monster was the hero of the revel, and that he had drank more than became gods or men. "Ho!" shouted the immortal sot, as he tossed from him a recently emptied goblet, to be replenished anew by an imp in waiting, "Ho! girls, to my knees, a brace of ye, that we may personate the *Three Graces*, while Erato enlivens us with a song;" and, with shame, I perceived an eager struggle among the fair for the possession of the monster's nether limbs, proving that ugliness, moral or physical, is not permitted to stand in the

way of woman's ambition, be she fairy or mortal born.

Encircling the waists of the successful competitors, and leering at them alternately with watery eyes and crescent-contorted mouth, that might be supposed to signify "how happy he could be with either, were t'other dear charmer away," he hiccupped Erato "to go it," and that poetical young lady, blushing a little, and crossing her hands upon her bosom as she stood up "the observed of all observers," commenced as follows:—

Under this tree, which a thousand years
But strengthens a thousandfold;
Which, unlike life in the breathing spheres,
Most vigour attains, most old,
Our yearly revel, oh! mighty Pan,
Our thousandth under this banyan,
To-day, to-day we hold.

Strange things since then have we fairies seen
In this world, but half our own:
Wide cities spread where our haunts have been,
Our elf-streams spanned with stone;
Sylvanus robbed, that the child of Ops
May surfeit man with her golden crops,
And make Pan's realm her own.

We have seen our spells believed and spurned,
Faiths flourish, and faiths decay,
Fields lost and won, and thrones overturned,
Since our primal holiday
'Neath this temple tree, which lonely stands,
Like a storm-beat rock 'mid shifting sands,
Linking the past-away.

The green grass waves where it standeth yet,
And shadows of trees fall round,
But, oh! the forest when first we met
Was fitter for fairy ground,
When tangle wild hid from mortal gaze
The mystical rites of fauns and fays,
By spies now girded round.

As she carolled the last line, her piercing eyes turned in my direction, and one of the whitest of little hands pointed me out to the company. Caught *in flagrante delicto*, I had nothing for it but to bolt; before I could gain my legs, however, a heavy hand was on my shoulder, and, in mortal terror of broken bones, I—awoke, to find the touch proceeded from a friend, who had accompanied me to the grounds, and who now informed me that unless my nap was curtailed we should probably be too late home for dinner.

Of course the fairy of my dream told a "wapper," in attributing so great an age to the banyan in the Botanical Gardens, which has not yet reached its one hundred and tenth summer—but poets have a li(e)cense not permitted to prose writers; and that this class of tree is capable of great antiquity, one on the Nerbudda, so extensive as to have afforded shelter to an army of sixteen thousand men at one time, goes far to prove, few of the offshoots from the parent stem attaining any girth deserving of the name of *trunk* under ten years old.

To reach the Botanical Gardens from Calcutta, it is requisite to cross the river, and "Paul's," or "Maitre Bruz Ghaut," as it is usually called (something over four miles from the city), is generally selected as the point of embarkation. The dinghee charges for going and returning amount to about half a rupee, which sum, considering the boats may be detained several hours, is not exorbitant. These

dinghees carry their names on a board hung in front of the cabin entrances (if such the little convex sheds over the stern sheets may be designated), and very eccentric names many of them are, the majority possessing lordly titles not usually to be found in alliance with such droll patronymics.

"The Seven Tanks," or in native parlance "Sath Talab," is a term for the show residence of a wealthy babboo, possessed of more money than brains, for the house on which he so plumes himself, and on which so much coin has been expended, is nothing more than an offering at the shrine of vanity, and a display in excessively bad taste. It stands on the Barrackpore Road, about three miles from Calcutta, and is entered by two arched gateways, situated one at each extremity of the grounds. These gates are surmounted by stucco animals intended to represent lions, but which look very like a breed between that species and the race of tiger cats.

Two very important gentlemen of the Brah-

miny Caste, furnished with most vicious-looking tulwars, and shouldering muskets of the Brown-bess school, strut under the arches of these gates, and may be pronounced part of the household guard of Sham Churn Mullick, Lord of the Manor and two crores of rupees made the Lord knows how. Ginger pop, and matches wherewith to light one's cigars, are proffered by screaming, naked little boys, on alighting at the portals, the said boys, however, not venturing to penetrate the guarded way, so that once in rear of the sentries visitors are freed from their persecutions. The first tank approached is the only thing really worth inspecting on the premises, it being stocked with tame fishes, that swim up and eat out of any one's hand (be he Heathen or Christian) who has the charity to offer them a crumb, or a bolus of what looks very like putty, the latter delicacy seeming to be most esteemed by them. As they have never been molested by the disciples of Isaac Walton, or tortured in the toils of a net, their

nerve is not surprising, but to have sufficient confidence in man's humanity to place their fins in his palm, is so suggestive of innocence before the fall, that I began to think Sham Churn and his possessions were under a peculiar dispensation. On reaching the house entrance, however, I was undeceived, as in defiance of a printed prohibition to the effect that nothing was to be received by the attendants, some cunning attempts were made to extort "buckshees" before Sham's upholstery bared itself to our wondering visions, but we declined being *particeps criminis* in the distribution of forbidden fruit, and proceeded on our inspection.

Not a bad statue that of Venus, at the extremity of the entrance hall, though it *had* struck me before I saw Sham's property, that the protruding arm and sheltering hand are very suggestive: then that painting of Mrs. Siddons and the Johnsonian party would look better in a better light. While endeavouring to make out the different figures of the group

by aid of a wretched pen and ink sketch, with names appended, a dusky guide, in a very stunning turban, called our attention to what he considered a unique, which he patted approvingly several times, grinning from ear to ear the while. It was a Honduras mahogany hatstand. Thinks I to myself, that fellow may be sharper than we wot of, and seeing our heads covered adopts this method of hinting at the proper implement on which to deposit out of door habilaments.

Marble floors and staircases are common to most Calcutta houses of the better class, so trampling that stone unconcernedly, we mounted upwards, and paraded leisurely through long rooms filled with all imaginable furniture—very expensive, no doubt, but stiff-looking as soldiers on drill—or the life-sized portraits of Sham Churn Mullick and his brothers, pertinaciously obtruded on the notice of visitors. The only room I *did* admire was one Oriental throughout, its furniture consisting solely of

cushions ranged against its four walls, and on the flooring adjacent to them, and of little tables, scarce higher than footstools, that could be wheeled to and fro at pleasure.

The pictures are for the most part a medley that second-hand dealers would be cautious of investing in, and the mirrors more remarkable for their size than elegance, as Sham Churn never uses this tawdry dwelling save when he gives a ball or nautch, living in an unpretending bungalow at the bottom of his garden. The money it cost would have been better expended in founding some institution for the improvement of his countrymen; but Hindoos are fonder of display than peacocks, or Sally the housemaid in her Sunday finery, and have no idea that exaltation consists in noble deeds—how should they, poor devils, enslaved by a faith more beastly than a leper's sores?

The chief recommendation of Sham Churn's garden, consists in its convenience as a smoking lounge, and the opportunities it affords amorous

Eurasians of making love in bench-furnished outhouses; while children may reap amusement from the grimaces of a monster monkey, who is trained to howl three separate times with banshee mournfulness, on his keeper pronouncing the word "*bolo*," a vocal accomplishment that not unfrequently procures him a harvest of two anna pieces, which he dutifully hands over to his superior, who deposits them in a small canvass bag at his girdle, with evident satisfaction.

A rhinoceros, too, helps out the cockney diversions of this establishment—mischievous sailors and others much delighting in goading him till he takes to a sheet of water beside which he is tethered, and in which he flounders about with a very sulky expression of countenance, and many longing turns towards the mud bank, from whose congenial colour a variety of unchristian and cunningly devised pokes had driven him.

But it is wrong to quarrel with one's bread

and butter; where great things are not attainable, one should be thankful for small favours, and Sham Churn so far may be considered a benefactor of his species. Diogenes did not envy Alexander, and Sham Churn no doubt considers his guarded portals and crammed chambers as regal, after a fashion, as the philosopher his tub, and would not change places with the Viceroy.

A drive of six miles, however (for one must go home again), in such gharrys as ply for hire in Calcutta—gharrys whose springs, like "The Last Rose of Summer," seem faded and gone, and the eccentric motion of whose wheels reminds one of weak ankles in children—added to the charges attendant on such galvanic locomotion, is a set-off against the pleasure of these small favours, by no means gratifying to a reminiscent mind, and, as Franklin says, makes one pay very dear for his whistle. As sight-seers there will be, however, till Sham closes his establishment, I would suggest a plan by

which he might both turn a penny himself and save the pockets of the curious: let him start an omnibus for the conveyance of comers and goers, charging them four annas a trip. His visitors will save twenty-eight annas by the process in addition to sore bones, and himself prove a fortunate speculator.

CHAPTER X.

Plentifulness of Hindoo holidays—What the British community think about them—A list of them—The Churruck Poojah—visit to Tum Tallah—Hindoo women—Nuisance of a crowd—A Quixotic allusion—A climb to the top of a house—View therefrom—Hook swinging—Reflections on ditto—A stiff north-wester—Adjutant birds after a ducking—Their immunities and partialities.

HINDOO holidays are plentiful as blackberries, and elicit, from indignant mercantile Britons, anathemas more expressive than becoming, for sadder hindrances to the "whole duty of man," as understood by the Calcutta community, do not exist.

"Make money—honestly if you can, but make money," is an aphorism more imperatively inculcated here than in any part of the world, *indirectly*, at all events, though not, perhaps, with the downright, roughly-expressed *viva voce*

energy peculiar to the less refined Australian colonies.

Who shows more unmistakably the cold shoulder to seeming indigence, and the unprivileged classes, than your Calcutta well-to-do? or who is more flattered, caressed, and feasted in his locality, than your Calcutta millionaire? be his locks ever so gray, he is the Adonis of ladies, and may count ogles by the lakh, as he does rupees; be he ever so great a muff, his own sex pronounce him a deuced fine fellow, mistaking his champagne, which they really admire, for a part of himself; and the native, whose sole standard of respectability is wealth, if in humble life, obeys him as a god; if of the Babboo class, salaams, and glides out of his slippers on approaching him, with true Jerry Sneak finish of demeanour. What marvel, then, if the Hindoo holidays are bugbears to the British community, who may be said to subside into half pay for half the year in consequence of them, and that too in a country they would

gladly fly from, but for their necessities, with railroad speed, it holding out none of those inducements to found a home, that make the Colonies bearable even in adversity. For the convenience of the curious, I append lists of the Mahomedan and Hindu festivals.

HINDU.	Days.
Sree Punchoome	2
Seebo Rattree	2
Dole Jattra	3
Baronee	1
Sree Ram Noboomee	1
Churruck Poojah	2
Dushohara	1
Chaun Jattra	1
Ruth Jattra	1
Oolta Ruth	1
Rakhee Poornemah	1
Junmo Astomee	2
Mohalyah	1
Eclipse	1
Doorgah Poojah	8
Lukee Poojah	2
Kalleeka Poojah	2
Bhratesdeteah	1
Juggod Hatree Poojah	2
Kartick Poojah	2
Total	37

MAHOMEDAN.	Days.
Ramazan	30
Eed after Ramarzan	2
Buqur Eed	2
Mohurrum	10
Akhree Chuna Shumba	1
Bara Wufat	1
Shube Bura[illegible]	1
Total	47

It will be seen by the foregoing that there are forty-seven Mahomedan, and thirty-seven Hindu holidays, which, taken together, fall due on nearly every month in the year, sadly interfering with business routine; and when in addition, all the Christian holidays are added, which, of course, exempt natives from labour as well as Europeans, it must be admitted there is some reason for merchants turning up the whites of their eyes and reprobating Heathen observances.

But, since idleness is inevitable on these occasions, while fretting of any sort, in a country like India, tends to retard digestion and derange the liver, the wise man will pocket his prejudices, harness his steed, and mingle with the superstitious crowd; so, the Churruck Poojah happening to come round on the 9th and 10th of April in the year of this veracious history, I jumped into a ticca gharry, on the second day of the festival, and started for the suburb of "Tum tollah," to see the swinging on hooks.

We found the road, as we drew near our

destination, choked with vehicles and human beings, jumbled in most picturesque confusion, among trays of glittering toys, and heaps of sucking gods and goddesses, miniature representatives of the many deities peculiar to the Hindu mythology. From the doors of various carriages peeped hundreds of juvenile Bengalee heads, their owners all ablaze with tinsel-shot raiment, and the chocolate-skinned mammas and aunts, who sat beside them, no less gorgeously got up, the latter imagining, doubtless, as they ogled us over their nose rings, that they looked very killing in their spangled and bangled finery; but, I must say, the personal charms of such dusky Venuses as came under my observation, were very disappointing, and fell far short of the Bombay standard of native beauty. Thick lips and bluff noses are not poetical images, and "the eyes dark charm so vain to tell, but gaze on that of the gazelle," was *all my* eye in relation to the damsels present at this Churruck Poojah. "What," asks some scep-

tical young lady, "were their eyes *not* black, then?" Most assuredly, my dear, but so were their skins; and taking into account the plentiful quantity of oil smeared over the latter, the cuticle, if anything, seemed most brilliant of the two. Your beautiful blue or jet black orbs, as the case may be (I wish I had the pleasure of ocular inspection), contrast with cheeks blending the lily and the rose, and a swan-like neck of pearly whiteness, while your lips, probably, are two pouting rosebuds, and (like gems set in gold) contrast heightens the charm of each; but, black cheeks—black lips—black neck—black hair—black everything! faugh! what do they picture but a chimney sweep?

After many anathemas on the obstructions in our path, and many spasmodic movements of the carriage, our Jehu at last drew up for good, and pointing out to us, with the butt end of his whip, the direction of the Tumasha, we alighted and mingled with the crowd, through which, by aid of much squeezing, hustling, and

bad Hindostanee, we forced our way, though not without scathe, smelling strongly ourselves (but with a much stronger smell in our nostrils) of cocoa-nut oil and Heathen perspiration, most obnoxious odours both of them, and the most difficult to grow reconciled to of all the disagreeables indigenous to India.

When that lunatic Don Quixote had occasion to solicit a message from his dulcinea, through Sancho Panza, and the latter was asked, on arriving with it, whether the lady's lips did not breathe delicious fragrance, the knight could not have felt more flabbergastered at the squire's reply, "they stunk of onions and cheese," than must readers of eastern fiction (old style) on first scenting an Indian skin; a severer blow to the romance of orientalism it would be impossible to deal; and I have known a strong man, long practised in chemical analysis, at *post mortem* examinations, turn deadly pale on encountering the odour.

A bamboo ladder, with the steps wider apart

than comported with the dignity of British legs, cased in British pantaloons, gave admission to the top of a house that afforded a good view of the spectacle; so, up it we climbed, to the great peril of Regent Street tailoring, and landed on a flat roof, occupied by all sorts of people, in all sorts of costumes, from nature's tawny membrane to broad cloth.

Our eyrie formed part of a quadrangle of house tops, closely packed with spectators, the frail sex, if anything, outnumbering the males, and looked down on a court yard, from the centre of which rose a bamboo pole, some thirty or forty feet tall; at the head of this pole, and working on a pivot, swung a transverse beam, whose lower end was furnished with a cross-bar, its upper one sustaining the hooked cord intended for the devotee.

Save in the space kept clear for performers, the court below was more densely crowded than the house flats, and the swaying to and fro of the motley multitude, coupled with the hubbub

of their voices, must have proved anything but pleasant to Europeans in the pit.

As the man who was to swing entered the area, the hubbub grew louder, the struggle more intense; he seemed to be about fifty years old, of the coolie class, and wore a simpering expression of countenance and glassiness of eye that testified to a pretty free use of bhang (an intoxicating liquor much used by the natives). Encircling his body, under the arm-pits, was an elastic band; save that, and a loin-wrapping langooty, he stood as nature fashioned him.

When he had stationed himself beneath the beam, two hooks, in size and shape not unlike those used by butchers to hang their meat by, were thrust through his flesh under the muscles of the back lying in the vicinity of the shoulder-blades, and a third hook took up the elastic band; the beam, that had been previously canted for him, was then drawn to a horizontal position, he mounting a ladder as the cord tightened, and a man seating himself on the cross-

bar at the other end, and four or five men in addition keeping it down by means of a laniard, the steps were withdrawn, and our friend began to swing.

Slowly he went round at first, but when flesh and band had acquired an equal tension, and the former hillocked out from his back like a buffalo hump, he commenced shouting, "de pak, de pak" (turn more violently), and the beam propellers, nothing loth, went circling at a brisk trot, while dancing boys with fire-pans in their front, capered about slowly beneath him to the music of tom-toms; and mimic tigers performed that beast's functions with commendable clownishness.

After gyrating for a quarter of an hour or so, with his arms and legs stiffened out like a horse's limbs under the influence of lock-jaw, and his simpleton-like countenance all expressive of "whose afraid?" he signalised for a bag filled with cocoa nuts, &c., that had been kept in readiness for him, and scattering them

to the ground in his aerial course, set no end of nincompoops scrambling, under the impression than whoever secured the showered largess would benefit thereby—the men by increase of vigour, and the females by increase of progeny. His swing finished, the festival was virtually concluded, so we took our departure, your humble servant cogitating over a manilla in a corner of his gharry, how far right a Christian and civilised Government is in permitting under its rule anything approaching to torture. That full-grown people will delight in pastimes more befitting school children, we need not leave England to assure ourselves of, and provided those pastimes are harmless, let all the "world be a stage, and all the men and women merely players;" but every Heathen rite revolting to humanity, should be put down with the strong hand of power, whatever be the prejudices of the nation over which that power rules. Such a policy, in my humble opinion, would do more to bring about the conversion of the Heathen than

any amount of missionary expostulation, for their barbaric observances once a nullity, excitement, which alone binds them to their religion, would die out, and they might imperceptibly slide into our code of faith when they found it more absorbing than their own.

But, observes a latitudinarian of the Canning type, the police are authorised to stop the swinging when injury to the individual is likely to arise from its too great prolongation.

Hang such sophistry! that which is culpable on a large scale is equally so on a small.

We did not drive home direct; a desire to air one's self after participating in the noisome exhalations inseparable from an Indian crowd, was natural, and the sky grew portentously black ere we turned our horses' heads for our hotel. Before we came abreast of Princeps Ghaut, which, on the land side, is bounded by a large open plain, the storm burst upon us, and for the time it lasted, Holy Paul, but it *was* a storm! the wind opened the ball with a fury

that prevented all progress, and even under shelter of the ghaut it was as much as our horse could do to maintain his position; notwithstanding the angular position in which the animal placed his legs, and pressed forward his chest, the gharry surged back several times, and it was fortunate for us that the entire concern did not go over the bank beside which we were compelled to pull up.

During the early part of the tempest, all objects were indiscernible for dust, which reddened the whole atmosphere; then, down came the rain with a fury unknown to temperate latitudes, sweeping horizontally, and plashing as only cataracts plash, while the broad vault of heaven, instead of emitting spasmodic flashes of lightning, blazed with phosphor fire from every point of the compass. The niggers who happened to be abroad in our vicinity, huddled themselves together under the pillared ceiling of the sheltering ghaut, and an unlucky European horseman, too drenched to accept a proffered

seat in our vehicle, held on to the door of it with one hand, while his other clutched firmly the bridle of his terrified nag.

Blinding, howling, splashing, flashing, was the order of the day for about twenty minutes, after which everything grew again serene, and moving lights along the Maidan intimated we too might reilluminate our extinguished lamps, and proceed homeward.

This storm, or squall, was one of the so-called north-westers, peculiar to the season. These squalls are generally the result of a succession of intensely hot days; in them buggies are frequently capsized, but the clouds of dust they set in motion is their most objectionable quality, and their brewing is a signal to close doors, and windows, wherever there are doors and windows to close.

It is amusing, after a drenching shower, to watch the lugubrious expression of the adjutants; these birds abound in Calcutta, and have an especial fondness for Government House, on

whose ballustraded roof, and in whose spacious compound they congregate largely. Whether the souls of defunct governors-general inhabit their bodies, is best known to the birds themselves, but if the proud consciousness which they seem to possess of superiority, to all the rest of the feathered host congregated in this City of Palaces, coupled with their favourite haunt, be proofs in point, they are assuredly nothing less than feathered Clives, Hastings, Bentincks, and other defunct *illustrissimi* of the same genus.

The gravity pictured in their capacious beaks, and the brown study imaged in their walk, as one long stilted leg moves with a slow march stiffness and stamp after the other, are most suggestive of sombre reflection, and tragic disquietude; and defunct governors-general we know, in this region of the earth, held no sinecures during their lifetime. Heaven forefend that the birds *should* have souls above garbage! but, if it be otherwise, may our present viceroy

escape an adjutant's casing when it shall please nature to gather him to his f(e)athers!

But to return to the birds—*purus et simplex*—despite their lofty bearing on sunshiny days, and their contemplative attitudes, a shower will take the shine out of them instanter; down go their tails to the very extremity of their legs, their backs assume a *mauvaise honte* convexity, and that they possess necks at all is hard to believe, so deeply embedded are those adornments within the recesses of their shoulder blades; indeed, so woe-begone do they look altogether, that it scarcely requires an effort of imagination to believe but that Mrs. Gamp, or some other sympathising hypocrite in petticoats, had covered them with workhouse mourning shawls to protect them from the weather.

The "freedom of the city" has been conferred upon them all, and they deserve the boon, for without the assistance of so efficient a staff, commissioners of sewers would hard have times of it; their penetrating glance permits no offal

to fester long in the sunshine, and, left to their own devices, they are better conservators of public health than many salaried members of the Medical College.

Individuals found molesting these birds lay themselves open to a fine; thus protected, they seldom meet with anything to upset their equanimity, and are bold and confident in proportion. One or more of them may sometimes be seen strutting down a street, amid carriages and foot-passengers, perfectly self-possessed, or promenading a garden as if of the family; but their chief delight, when not troubled with hunger, is in high places, and, as I have said before, the top of Government House is their favourite resort on these occasions; there they will stand for hours, to all appearance immovable as statues, and, viewed from behind, look very like tall thin gentlemen in tights, whose hands are buried beneath their coat tails, and whose thoughts are in dream land.

CHAPTER XI.

Another holiday—Description of the Chaun Jattra—King of Oude—Serampore by rail—Character of the country—Paun houses—Arrival at station—Goings on in the town and river—Comicality of Jaggernauth, and who takes care of his fees—Jaggernauth's cars—Observations on the festival—Risks of sunshine—Bailey's hotel—A scrimmage and an Amazonian landlady—Treachery of the Hooghly and fate of an actress—Danger of navigating it after dark—Doorga Poojah—Trip to Burdwan—A cool innkeeper—Airs of the shopocracy—Rajah of Burdwan's menagerie—A bear's accomplishments and a wolf's voracity—Aviary—The inconveniences of a shower when lost in a maze—The Rajah of Burdwan's house—His slippers and the "length of his foot"—His love for English ladies—General native propensity that way—Effects of a lesson read to the Rajah by a German.

THE next native holiday, which we thought it worth while to participate in, was the "*Chaun Jattra*," which professes to celebrate the descent of Ganga, or the Ganges, from the

top of a very lofty mountain named "*Baikuntha*," down which, saith the legend, "She rushed from the matted hair of the vagabond Shiva, following in the footsteps of the conch-sounding '*Bhagirath*,' and after a weary pilgrimage fell into the wide sea, liberating as she did so, sixty thousand sons of the mighty King of Oude." Alas for greatness! "The mighty King of Oude" is a term no longer applicable, his Majesty of that late bellicose province being *now* one of the many regal pensioners of Queen Victoria—exercising sovereignty from a villa in Garden Reach, over two or three hundred half washed, half naked dependents, who housed in miserable mat huts around the ex-Monarch's dwelling, are rapidly converting a picturesque and romantic locality into an unsightly back slum, to the great disgrace of the British authorities who permit it.

But to return to the festival. Serampore being reputed the best locality to witness it from, we repaired for tickets to the Hourah

Ghaut Railway Station, in front of which was congregated a dense crowd of natives, bent on the same errand as ourselves. The squeezing and pushing resembled that which is to be seen any night of the season before the pit entrance of a London theatre, on the advent of some favourite play; and the noise, for natives can do nothing without noise, was like the chattering of a bevy of monkeys.

To obtain tickets without sowing the seeds of an itch, or fainting from human effluvia, seemed hopeless by the legitimate entrance, so, watching an opportunity when the English policemen were swearing, and flourishing their staves above the heads of several refractory Hindoos, we dodged behind the sentry-boxlike looking office, and taking the native clerk in the rear, proffered our money, then, hurrying down a long pier, stepped into a lozenge-shaped steam ferry, a few revolutions of whose paddles placed us on the opposite side of the river.

After traversing a line of carriages that

seemed interminable, all of which were occupied by natives packed together as densely as sheep in a pen, we came to one appropriated to the use of Europeans, or more properly speaking, to such as wore the costume, for our companions were all of the class ycleped Eurasians, which, being interpreted, means the offspring of black mothers by white papas—a race both in physique and colour, partaking more of the Asiatic than the European.

Railways have not yet lost their novelty for Hindus, and a great deal of cheering preluded our departure.

After clearing the station, the first mile of our journey might be said to pass between a *cheveaux-de-frieze* of truck wheels: these distanced, the scenery all the way to Serampore alternated between native villages, cocoa-nut plantations, paddy fields, mingled meadow and forest land, and paun houses—the latter being large bamboo enclosures, bristling with spikes also of bamboo, to prevent birds from molesting

the crops beneath. The jack, the plantain, and the date were in full bearing, the fruit of the latter, as it hung in crimson clusters under the tufted foliage, looking far more enticing than its taste is agreeable.

A run of sixteen miles through a country flat as a bowling-green, brought us to our journey's end, and alighting from the train, we mingled with the dense throng wending their way to the river or to the shrines.

The banks of the former were adorned with garlands of flowers, and lined with thousands of dusky devotees in all the flutter of white muslins, coloured silks, bangles, &c. Some making offerings to the fishes, others preparing lamps of clarified butter to float down the stream, and the wiser sort indulging in ablutions. Turning from these, we stumbled on a painted image, which we were informed was the God Jaggernauth, or Lord of the World, not the real Simon Pure, but his representative, a comical looking individual with very extensive eyes and

golden arms which screwed off and on, but no symptom of a nose, a feature we ourselves could gladly have dispensed with for the nonce, for reasons previously mentioned. Over the head of this potent deity a crafty looking Brahmin poured water from a silver jug, while sweetmeats, flowers, and money were presented him by the superstitious multitude, who kept shouting, "Oh! Jaggernauth, Jaggernauth!" the said Jaggernauth all the while reposing on his stumps beside the officiating Brahmin with the imperturbability of a barber's block, or Punch's dog, as seen in the frontispiece of that jocose periodical, utterly oblivious to the homage and money paid him by the crowd, and to the holy water of the Ganges that streamed down his painted chaps, typifying the bath which he is supposed to indulge in annually; but the officiating priest took all becoming care of the god's property, a kindness for which clerical representatives of other faiths are not less conspicuous.

Wending our way inland from the river, a walk of three quarters of a mile, or thereabout, brought us in front of Jaggernauth's cars, a couple of which stood under sheds ready for the next day's promenade; they were heavy, van-like vehicles, painted all over with grotesque figures, and possessed an infinity of solid wheels, like huge grindstones—wheels that but for the restraints of English law would crush to death now, as they did aforetime, many a superstitious devotee, who thought and still thinks heaven the sure reward of lives trampled out by the rough-riding of Jaggernauth.

That fun had as much to do as faith, in the observance of this festival, was evident from the ribald conversation and licentious proceedings of the multitude; and if anything were wanting to prove it a farce in a religious point of view, the fact of my friend and self being permitted to mount the steps of a shrine, and to receive from a Brahmin a sprinkling of holy water and sundry wreaths of flowers, the pro-

perty of Jaggernauth, on payment of a trifling bukshees, is, I think, sufficient evidence.

As we retraced our steps, with the flowers wreathed round our necks, many a broad grin and stare of amused surprise lit up the features of the tawny multitude both male and female, notwithstanding they were similarly decorated, showing their religious prejudices were not of a very violent cast. *Pride* of religion is certainly not a failing with the Hindu; he may resent any attempts to coerce him into embracing another faith, but he has no overweening ambition to make converts to his own.

A couple of hours' ramble under an Indian sun, in the month of June, is rather a perilous performance; but for the plentiful perspiration that deluged us from head to foot, we might have had cause to rue our imprudence; as it was, we were too much knocked up for any further diversion, and on reaching the inn at Serampore, found reclining on sofas, with brandy and cigars for companionship, more to

our tastes than concluding the evening with a nautch, to which we had been invited, and which generally terminates every Hindu festival.

We had not long enjoyed our *otium cum tabacum*, ere a terrific hubbub in the regions underneath, brought us again on our legs, and running down stairs, we perceived the innkeeper and a stable-like looking individual struggling together on the ground. As they rolled about in the fury of the combat, the landlord now uppermost, and now the groom, so quick were the alternations of position that a confused jumble of legs and arms, swaying wildly about like the limbs of an inverted cockroach, was alone discernible, and consequently the landlady, who like a true and faithful spouse, had come to the rescue of her "man" with a gigantic Doland's telescope, hammered her better half as often as she did her opponent. Half a dozen niggers too, belonging to the establishment, who would have run a mile before lifting their hands to the groom, had he

been capable of defending himself, now that he was down, tugged, buffeted, and abused him most valiantly, so that when the culprit was released by the interference of some by-standers, his garments were found to be well-nigh in rags, and a flash silver chain which had encircled his neck, and festooned gracefully over his waistcoat, lay in fragments on the floor.

It turned out on inquiry that a woman was at the bottom of the affair. In her ignorance, or pretended ignorance of the locality, she had accepted his escort to the inn, and could not shake him off when there, his amorous turn of mind inducing him to make proposals to the fair one, of which she disapproved; some virtuous screams brought the landlord to her assistance, who, being an old man-of-war's man, thought a display of valour the shortest way of settling all disputes, and, without superfluous inquiries, took the side of the weakest party, though he afterwards acknowledged it as his opinion that

" the dame sailed under false colours, and didn't carry a clean bill of lading."

Serampore was built by the Danes, who sold it to the British Government; in many of its streets stand stiff rows of houses, dilapidated and tenantless, long grass sprouting from the apertures of the windows, and the red brick, of which the dwellings are composed, blackened by time and weather. The ground-floors of some of these afford shelter to the poorer class of natives, who, crouched on the damp, unboarded, and weed-grown floors, look scarcely human in the gloom by which they are surrounded; but the greater number seem never to have echoed to a footfall for years, and wear a haunted, gloomy appearance, that would deter most men from occupying them even at a nominal rental; but the portion of the town facing the river, where most of the Europeans reside, contains many handsome villas, and being fronted on the opposite side of the water by the Military Cantonment of Barrackpore, the Governor-General's

suburban residence, and a beautiful park, has a very cheerful and romantic look, especially from the hotel, which is approached through a sunny garden, and ornamented behind by a spacious tank.

The treacherous Hooghly, *alias* Ganges (for it is a branch of the famous river that "liberated 60,000 sons of the mighty King of Oude"), seized the opportunity of this festival to exhibit its manumitting properties anew, by submerging, or, in other words, liberating the souls of sixteen Bengalees, who were capsized in a dinghee while paying homage to the River God; their struggles were short, for a man once in the under-current of this river has little chance of again visioning its surface. Many and deplorable are the accidents produced by the swiftness of its stream; even ships, once aground, cannot withstand its impetuosity, but fall over and fill with a rapidity that gives little leisure for escape. Not content with the numerous dead cast purposely into its greedy maw, it is ever

craving fresh victims, as a brief residence in Bengal will convince any one who reads the daily papers. The most melancholy accident which I remember occurred to an actress, whose mother some years before had perished by fire on the stage while performing before a Calcutta audience. The subject of this notice was returning in a bolio, or cabined dinghee, from the Howra Theatre, with the produce of her night's earnings, accompanied by her daughter, an interesting girl aged sixteen, and ten other passengers, when the boat, drifting broadside on against the chain cable of an anchored ship, turned over, and submerged all but three individuals, who were fortunately seated on the cabin roof; a faint cry, as they sank, enclosed as it were in a trap, was the only sound heard, and they had disappeared for ever.

To cross the river after dark is very imprudent, especially as rumour has it that the native watermen are not over-scrupulous, and if they thought any valuables could be secured by

giving one a bath in their idolised stream, would feel little regret in finding their boats bottom upward.

The most popular Hindu holiday, and the one of longest duration, is the "*Doorga pooja*," which all classes, young and old, male and female, hail with the greatest delight, and principally for this reason, that every one repairs to his native place when it comes off, and feasts among his kindred as Englishmen do at Christmas. It lasts for eight days, and commences in the latter part of September. The religious ceremonies connected with it are these:—The goddess "Dorga," wife of "Shiva" (so runs the superstition), once upon a time killed a "fi, fo, fum" bloodthirsty giant named "Mahisa," who not only took delight in practising all sorts of after-dinner cruelties on poor weak mortals, but had the effrontery to bully his peers, the gods, likewise; hence his punishment; and to commemorate this plucky feat of the beneficent goddess is the object of the festival. It would

seem by the image representing her that she could not boast personal beauty as one of her attributes, for besides having a very hideous physiog', ten arms sprout from her body like quills upon the fretful porcupine, each grasping a weapon; her right leg rests on a lion's back, and her left is footstooled by the shoulder of the giant Mahisa, who seems to have been just snuffed out by her prowess, and is being further polished off by a highly-excited snake, whose fangs are buried where the monster's heart might be supposed to lie. Her two daughters stand one on each side of her, and near them are to be seen the elephant-headed fright, "Ganesha," and a feminine figure taking it easy on a peacock's back, who is honoured with the patronymic of the fair "Katikea." The entire image, which has several other adjuncts, and is composed of straw and clay, is worshipped for three days, and on the fourth is chucked either into the Ganges or a tank, every one being permitted to filch what adornments they can from

her goddesship on that occasion. Many rites and ceremonies are observed during the three days, but the only one particularly savage is that which occurs on the third, when no end of goats, sheep, and buffaloes are led to the altars, and slaughtered by Brahmins and blacksmiths, their death cries mingling with the music of tom-toms and the shoutings of the multitude assembled to witness the bloody spectacle. Each evening is wound up by the singing of filthy songs, and by scenic representations as disgusting as the vocal performances, and when the whole affair is concluded, it seems to be the custom of all to get more or less drunk on a solution of hemp leaves.

Europeans whose avocations tie them down to Calcutta, find this holiday the best opportunity for bracing themselves with a little country air; and while some of a sporting turn of mind repair to the Sunderbunds to shoot bears and stick pigs, others scatter themselves over the surrounding townships, and drink, smoke, and play

billiards, regardless of law, ledgers, and bills of lading.

Being myself deficient in sporting paraphernalia, and having no wish to remain isolated when all the Calcutta world were on the wing, I acceded to the proposition of a friend to accompany him to Burdwan and started for that place immediately after.

Burdwan, by rail, is sixty-eight miles from Calcutta; the scenery, all the way, was but a repetition of that seen between Calcutta and Serampore, and a dead level throughout. About two miles before reaching the place, a large swamp, intersected by watercourses, has to be crossed, and this is spanned by a viaduct of 280 arches. Neither jungle in its grandeur, nor spires oriental, or, in fact, anything worth looking at, greeted my vision during the journey; a more uninteresting line, in a picturesque point of view, it would be difficult to discover, and right glad were we when the terminus was reached. Handling our carpet bags, we marched

away for the hotel, a light built, airy bungalow, verandahed before and behind and having all its rooms on one floor, a pleasant garden surrounding the whole building. An eccentric-looking individual, who, to judge by his thickness of speech and staggering gait, seemed strongly attached to his own cellar, greeted us on entering, and in reply to our request for bed-rooms, stated "we might have one between us if we liked, but he couldn't spare us separate ones," and then plunging his hands deep into his trowsers pockets, and making a capital A of his legs, added, "if that won't suit you, you may mizzle." The latter we were not inclined to do, there being no other house of accommodation, nor, barring mine host's impertinence of manner, was there any particular hardship in accepting his terms; but such Yankee offhandedness, in a country anything but republican, took me a little aback, I must confess, at the time, though a more intimate acquaintance with the European trading community in Bengal has since taught

me that mine host of Burdwan was not singular in his ideas of "equality and the rights of man," various of the shopocracy, who, in the same capacity at home, would never think of obtruding their republican notions on customers, imagining, by some incomprehensible hallucination, the so doing quite legitimate under Indian skies; probably from the fact that all manual labour devolves on natives, and, furthermore, because they (the trades), without exception, keep carriages, and a large staff of domestic servants, like their betters; forgetful that climate necessitates the latter, as it does mansions scarcely less spacious than Apsley House; but as living in a large house does not necessarily make a Duke of Wellington, neither will a shop in India transform a tailor into a gentleman.

Let it not be supposed for an instant that I wish to disparage the trading community: as a body, they are, in importance, intelligence, and enterprise, second to none of their expatriated countrymen; and when the mutiny broke out

the " gallant volunteers," it is well known, mustered largely among its members the tradesmen of Calcutta; but, to "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" seems, with some of them, a very hard condition, an idea seeming to prevail that going to India resembles a trip to Cremorne Gardens, wherein all should be admitted on an equal footing.

The *lion* of Burdwan is its rajah; and the *sights* of that rural locality his palaces, in the largest of which he usually resides. The minor one is not ten minutes' drive from the inn, and possesses that invariable appendage to eastern seats of pretension, a menagerie. Nothing, of course, is to be seen in the latter, that may not be viewed to better advantage in our Zoological Gardens at home, but there is, nevertheless, something very imposing in the idea of private individuals keeping a large collection of forest denizens, much as our aristocrats do packs of hounds and racing studs. The feeding part of the affair is in itself no trifle, and the space re-

quired for their accommodation very suggestive of opulence.

A paved, oblong court, bordered by cages on its four sides, with lanes running behind them to admit the keepers, came first under our observation. Here we met sundry fellow countrymen, studying "the wild beast*ies*" with as much attention as though their like had never been seen before. One practical-minded visitor, by the aid of a long pole, pushed forward horizontally, till it reached within an inch of a black bear's muzzle, induced that hirsute quadruped to favour us with a jig on his hind legs, which was made more diverting by the accompaniment of a song, that spasmed from his opened mouth, as he rose and fell, piston fashion, his wedge-shaped head, the while, swaying from side to side, in the most melancholy manner imaginable, and his forelegs gluing to his ribs, meekly as the arms of charity children do when they are saying their catechisms.

A boa constrictor, who had recently swallowed

his goat, could not be persuaded, by any amount of nudges, to uncoil himself for our amusement, but a wolf displayed his ravenous propensities to perfection, by bolting large junks of meat—bones and all—as fast as they came within reach of his paws, that kept up a running fight, for ten minutes or more, with the walking-stick of a German Jew, as the latter tantalisingly endeavoured, but in vain, to abstract with that weapon the tit bits from their rightful owner.

After making the tour of the court, which contained lions, tigers, leopards, monkeys, porcupines, a chamelion, and various other specimens of the undomesticated genus, our guide, a dropsical European, of the Daniel Lambert school, conducted us to open garden ground, which, among other addenda, contained two deep and extensive pits or tanks, walled round, and terraced about three feet from their tops: in one of these paced to and fro a couple of magnificent giraffes, their heads towering high above the parapet that encompassed them, and

every now and then stretching beyond it as approaching visitors excited their curiosity; the other pit, half filled with muddy water, was tenanted by a rhinoceros and several alligators, who were dozing with their snouts just awash with the flood.

Leaving these, we came to an extensive aviary, and after feasting our eyes on all sorts of gaudy-plumaged birds, drew up in front of a circular tank or stone basin of water, for the purpose of seeing the pelicans fed. A man bearing a capacious basket filled with fish, the smaller ones entire and the larger sort cut into shreds, emptied them into this basin, and a sliding door, on the furthest margin of it, being opened at the same time, out rushed, like so many desperadoes, a crowd of wing-flapping pelicans, who, plunging into the water, dived and scrambled with greedy eagerness for their evening meal, each striving who could bag the greatest number of fish in the smallest space of time, without any regard to a fair division of the spoil: I fancied one or

two of them—like the timid of the Anglo-Adamite race—looked none the fatter for "unrestricted competition." The poetic vagary,

> "That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can,"

may do well enough for pelicans and men in their primitive state, but when the human or any other species become artificially massed, and dependant rather on *mundane* than *Divine* government for subsistence, some *leetle* protection is requisite, if only to prevent the weak from perishing.

St. Swithin taking it into his head to pelt us with a shower of rain, just as my thoughts were assuming a political shape, I was compelled to abandon them, and set off with my companions at a brisk double-quick for the rajah's residence; this could only be approached through a garden, laid out after the fashion of a maze, and during the greater part of the saint's weeping fit, we were, much against our wills, exploring it; now

trotting in circles, now describing curves like S's, then delineating Roman W's; losing sight of each other at certain points, and plumping into one another's waistcoats a minute afterwards; so that when we *did* emerge from the labyrinth, and stood panting under the portico of the house, we were (what kitchen wenches are said to love equally with policemen) dripping. A square, terraced tank, in immediate contact with the vestibule of the mansion, makes the latter look very charming *out*side, but the rooms are small, dark, and—like Sham Churn Mullick's—crammed with European furniture, which, though suited to our frigid and gloomy climate, has a very stuffy and suffocating appearance in lands

"Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine."

What a pity it is that civilization has the bump of acquisitiveness so largely developed—that wherever an Englishman plants his standard, his roast beef must follow, though it is a labour to

eat it; and his gin be made marketable, where a glass of cold water is as precious to the rich man as to Dives in the "tormenting flame." To make Indian rooms pleasant, space, in my opinion, should be the first consideration; ottomans the second; so at heart thinks the wealthy Asiatic, but he is Fashion's slave and bends to the powers that be, who, of course, are partial to British wares, or they were no "true Britons."

The only items, domestics excepted, that seemed to be oriental, were the rajah's dresses; a pile of these, all flashing with silver and gold, covered an English bedstead, and reached to the ceiling; his slippers were equally abundant, and boasted, among many of Pagan curl, not a few that had been worked for him by the fair hands of English ladies, who had "got the length of his foot," which is reputed to be a very small one for his sex.

His rajahship is a great admirer of English dames, and being famed for the possession of

vast wealth, has, if rumour tells the truth, not always admired in vain, or "shot his shafts at adamantine hearts." Many others of the class to which he belongs are similarly prejudiced in favour of our countrywomen, the every look of the fat, oily sensualists, when they chance to pass an Eve in crinoline, testifying to the fact more eloquently than words; an expansion of the nostrils, a gloating expression in the eyes, a steady stare, and "longing, lingering look behind," being invariable symptoms with them on these occasions. Even money, that they worship like so many Shylocks, is counted dross, and squandered with reckless indifference for the smiles of western Cyprians.

To shake hands with an outsider—a man who neither bears arms nor meddles with red tape—would give the rajah of Burdwan a fever. He possesses, however, his good points. Having business to transact, on one occasion, with a German merchant, a certain day was appointed for an interview: the merchant was punctual to

time, but no rajah appeared. A second meeting was arranged, and his rajahship again proved a defaulter. Europeans in India, whoever they may be, look on black fellows with a certain degree of contempt, and the affair on hand chancing to be one about which the rajah was anxious, the German determined to read him a lesson. Accordingly, when a third interview was demanded, the merchant had "other business to attend to," and a further pressing message from the rajah, received for reply, that in Europe the man who broke his word was considered to act ungentlemanly. This last broadside not only produced an apology from the lord of many acres, but caused him to do voluntary penance into the bargain. His pugnacious man of business was offered, and accepted—till their affairs could be settled—sole occupancy of the abode described in this chapter, where he was treated with as much distinction as was Sancho Panza during his governorship of Barrataria, and fed far more luxuriously.

CHAPTER XII.

Comparison between insiders and outsiders—Advantages of having a wife—Effects of drill on the Manners—Aristocracy—"Fracas in high life"—Covenanted men *versus* Queen's men—Unmarried ladies—Diana—Desdemona and a Mrs. Smith—Conscience and happiness analysed—Half castes and their legs—Elephantiasis—Calcutta bazaars—Their comicality—Advice to Dickens and Leach—A national commemoration—Scotch prominency—Reasons for it—Mr. Wilson—A monster meeting.

"GIVE me again my hollow tree, my crust of bread and liberty" must be the desire of most struggling Europeans who are fated to pass a succession of years in Calcutta. The military man varies his ground, and being eligible "*for the best society*," may generally find something to compensate for the monotony of Indian life, he has also much leisure on his hands, which he can employ in sporting diversions if of a sport-

ing turn; but the unhappy outsider, whose means of subsistence are entirely dependent on his own exertions, and who has to fight his way under difficulties, inch by inch, to a recognised position, often sighs in secret for the, perhaps, simple but unalloyed pleasures that are only to be found among kindred in his native land. The hope of an independence that shall place him after a few years' toil above the necessity of dirt eating, is his sole solace for the airs of superiority assumed by the self-styled aristocracy of India, and its depressing climate, but it is too often "hope that maketh the heart sick." The famous pagoda tree has long since withered, and the soil on which it once flourished, to be profitable *now*, must be well worked, and by a master hand.

Picture to yourself a man, whose every-day life for a long series of years is comprised in a hot breakfast at eight; then a drive in such conveyance as he may possess to an office, where, under punkahs, he transacts business till

two, temporarily abandoning his labour to partake of a warm tiffin, or a glass of brandy and a biscuit, at some public refreshment room; again returning to his desk and scribbling or bargaining till five, on the stroke of which fast goes the lock of his office door, and he once again mounts his trap to do the round of the daily encircled Maidan, among a crush of other vehicles, till the growing darkness warns him it is time to prepare for dinner, over which meal he drones for an hour or so, and finishes with a cigar—fit *finale* to Indian dinners generally, that, taken at the best, are very cloudy affairs.

Such, with scarcely a break, is the weary and monotonous life of a Calcutta outsider. On Government House, and the dwellings of official bigwigs, he looks with a jaundiced eye, for unless he happens to be a mercantile Dives, their portals open not to him. Class distinctions of this kind are not felt in Great Britain —whatever be a man's station *there*, he counts his peers by millions, and finds diversity enough

in his own circle, without troubling his head about others; while public amusements are rife as blackberries, and within the reach of any man's purse.

But in the metropolis of British India, where "everybody knows everybody," and out-door diversions, like angels' visits, are "few and far between," reminders of a man's status are too numerous to be agreeable to the outsider; his bitterness is further aggravated by the fact that two-thirds of the privileged classes are, as regards birth, social position, and general education in their own country, no one whit his superiors. Nay, more—many of his relatives may have been, and probably are, covenanted members of the community among which he is toiling under a ban; is it wonderful then that he should feel sore at distinctions so questionable?

The possession of a wife, if she happen to be a white one, and conversant with the Queen's English, is one step on the ladder to social preferment; but woe betide the unfortunate

wight who has plighted his troth to a half blood! with him the game is up, and the black cross ineffacable from his name on the visiting list. The lady's crinoline may cover as great a space of territory, and her lace be as unexceptionable as the Vice Reine's, but a glance is sufficient to show that the jewel so finely set is not the genuine article, and consequently inadmissible in high places.

Young civilians and cadets, on the contrary, from the moment they embark for the field of their labours, have a foretaste of the welcome that awaits them on Indian ground. Their callings made known, and they are not backward in furnishing the information, a frank and affable tone is assumed towards them by the high in rank of their own class, while experienced Indians of equivocal status sometimes seem to forget the relative places of manhood and youth, in their too great deference and timidity of approach to acquaintanceship with youngsters just promoted to the dignity of coat tails.

This in some cases is melancholy to see—ludicrous in others, and is the effect of *drill* on systems enervated by warmth of climate. "Iterlopers" proceeding to India for the first time, with healthy English blood in their veins (if gentlemen) are in no way troubled with this *maurais honte;* on the contrary, they seem rather quisically disposed, than otherwise, at any exhibition of the kind by their fellow-passengers; but a few years' residence in India painfully convinces them of the folly of judging a benighted community by the ideas of a very enlightened one. However radical an Englishman may be in the parent country, he no sooner migrates to one of her dependencies, than the distinctions and observances against which he raved so frantically in the first instance, are stoutly battled for in the second. The only *blood* aristocracy in British India (with the exception of, perhaps, a Governor-General and one or two lofty officials) consists of natives, who count for nothing in the eyes of their con-

querors, and to fill up the hiatus, counterfeits are substituted, who not unfrequently "play such fantastic tricks before high heaven, as makes the angels weep." A bellicose assistant-surgeon, attached to one of the native regiments, took it into his head not long since to place in bodily fear sundry of Her Majesty's liege subjects commonly known as courtesy esquires, and the affair being made public, Indian papers headed it "Fracas in *high* life." The editors of the said papers were not men of the Douglas Jerrold or Mark Lemon stamp, and were as guiltless of *intended* irony as Dr. Cumming, when he gave to the world his "*coming* end." This continued playing at eagles, by tom-tits, leads the actors after a time to believe in the fictions they have conjured up, a belief which is further fostered by the cringing and slavish character of the natives among whom they dwell; consequently, when old Anglo-Indians return to the land of their nativity, they have either imbibed notions so preposterously inflated, or so sneakingly

timid, as cannot fail to create laughter among their matter-of-fact fellow-countrymen.

It is not altogether fair weather, however, with the Indian covenanted official, even in his *own* arena; he *too* is snubbed as far as the etiquettes of polite society admit, by pucka (genuine) Queen's men; a large proportion of these, though younger sons probably, are scions of a good stock either in point of birth or influence, and look on official service in India rather as a rustication than anything to be proud of; they consequently entertain little regard for men imbued with purely Indian ideas, and are thorns in the sides of the latter, who would gladly get quit of them at any price, and who are ever carping at the invidious distinctions made between the two services—distinctions, however, against which they enter no protest when the gain is on their side.

Poor, degraded humanity! stripped of your manifold disguises, the same hideous spectacle stands revealed to all: and the ugly skeleton

that scares us in the palace, mocks us on the highway, and greets us at the hovel's entrance, is selfishness.

As regards unmarried ladies (European) the cards are to a certain extent in their own hands, and on the way they play them depends their social position. Excessive beauty, though often falling prize to a sergeant-major, may, if well managed, aspire to the conquest of a K.C.B., and good looks not unfrequently to the subjugation of an attenuated member of council, and if plainness—since free trade in women as well as wares has been sanctioned—is sometimes returned unsaleable on the owners' hands, the circumstance may be considered rather the exception than the rule. The nature of women, however, like the longitude, or the liquidation of the national debt, will, I fear, ever remain a problem unsolved; if they themselves cannot analyse it, how is it possible for the other sex to do so? Rules for the guidance of a mental organisation, that seems to be opposed to all

rule. Caution to natures incapable of resisting an impulse, would be worthless. When so pure a gem as Desdemona could not resist the soft sawder of a natural born chimney-sweep, and Diana had the cruelty to perforate the scull of a young man with a heavy pair of antlers (thereby indirectly becoming his murderer) simply because he admired her beauty—an act anything but distasteful to ladies in general—it will not startle my fair readers to be told that scores of spinsters, who refuse handsome treasury clerks and big-bellied merchants at home, often surrender their freedom by coupling with half-caste Adonises of the same calling in India, which I take it is neither to their own advantage nor to the improvement of the human species generally.

A certain Mrs. Smith (there are so many of the name I make no excuse for writing it in full), a lady with the sweetest of eyes, and hair of golden light, had for husband one of these Ebon-ites, who went by the soubriquet of *black*

Smith, so that strangers, whenever they chanced to vision the lady, and made the natural inquiry, "Who is she?" received for answer, "Oh! don't you know Mrs. S——, the *black* Smith's wife?" thereby leading innocents to infer the lady had wedded a disciple of Vulcan, instead of a highly respectable professor of tongues. Maugre the poet's assertion,

> "Skins may differ, but affection
> Dwells in white and black the same,"

I don't believe it. Affection and conscience both, though qualities natural to the human species, have no natural bias, but depend entirely on culture and tradition for their development. When men say, "conscience will condemn us if we do wrong," the question arises, what *is* wrong? A Christian might reply, for instance, "Maliciously to take the life of a fellow-creature!" But ask the Bedouin Arab, and he will tell you, it is permitting that man to exist unvisited by his vengeance who has spilt the blood

of one of his kindred. Each had these notions instilled into them from childhood, and they are the notions which have pertained to their order from time immemorial. So with affections, which may be designated prejudices fostered by the accident of birth and association. That affection, which is *per*fection (or the nearest approach to it), from an English point of view, may be incomprehensible to the mind of the half-caste. Forgetfulness of self, and a secret happiness in self-denial for the benefit of one's husband and children, are not traits in the native character, of which the half-caste largely partakes, together with the cunning and coarse sensuality of the Hindu. These are not elements that conduce to the happiness of English married life, and when passion is satiated the spell is broken. Nor is the minor drawback, tinge of skin, so easily got over as some imagine; even to the third and fourth generation will the type of origin manifest itself, though each succeeding scion of the family may have

formed alliances with Europeans. It would be wrong to say, the *sins* of the fathers will be visited on the children, where, morally speaking, no sin is, but the trace of oriental origin takes long to efface, and the bar sinister is not an ornament in one's escutcheon.

Half-caste ladies, too, wear very badly, and after thirty years of age are on a par in personal appearance with the usual run of English grandmother's, built on the lath and plaster system. Here and there, a fat specimen will turn up, but you may rely on her being dropsical, and save for the drapery that veils her lower extremities, might probably discover elephantiasis (a very common complaint with her countrymen on the mother's side) had something to do with the convexity of her instep and the sturdiness of her calves.

This complaint is more unsightly than disabling, to judge by the number of natives afflicted with it, who are daily to be seen pursuing their avocations in the bazaars, and

traversing the public thoroughfares. As a Hindu leg, from the knee downwards, is never concealed, and often visible much higher, the difference of size between a diseased limb and a healthy one is exposed in all its hideousness, and is sufficient to turn the stomach of any man not accustomed to the spectacle, more especially when it happens to be partly powdered with road dust, which gives it a piebald appearance, very suggestive of ulceration. When sight-seers in London visit the annual exhibition of pictures, glancing, perhaps, during their tour of the rooms at some Eastern bazaar, and the motley crowds that fill it, arrayed in all the glory of richly contrasting oil paint, little idea have they of the reality, at any rate of a *Calcutta* bazaar, which (saving the stalls of the slipper makers, and a few others used for the display of gold and silver ornaments) is sombre enough in all conscience. Burnt sienna and brown umber, in light and heavy washes, would represent it more accurately than any other colours,

and the dingier the artist made his picture, the nearer would he approach the truth.

Miserable hovels, propped by crooked wooden pillars, and shaded in front by ragged mats all askew, make two-thirds of the buildings, whose interior back grounds have the gloom of dungeons, and the human specimens there grouped a ghostly indistinctness; the flash of an eye, or the flutter of a filthy muslin through the dark obscure, alone indicating the presence of life in those quarters. And though close to the road side, outlines become sharp enough, the same sarsaparilla hue pervades shopboards, shopmen, and, in numerous cases, the wares exhibited. Then, again, the outer walls of nearly every other house are plastered with cow dung, shaped into flat circular cakes, and scored across; this commodity the natives use for firing, and fix thus to dry; but its unsightliness, as a spectacle, may be well imagined.

On the streets running between these dingy borderings, the sun flares down fiercely enough

parching them to an extent that causes a cloud of dust to rise with every footfall, though not a breath of wind be stirring; and this, coupled with the dirty and half-clad appearance of the pedestrians usually to be seen in these localities, and the total absence of anything like order in their monopoly of the roadways, gives the *tout ensemble* of a Calcutta bazaar an aspect of filth and confusion quite unique in its way.

But though unsuggestive of the poetical, Calcutta bazaars afford a fine field for the talents of such men as Leech and Dickens; the former might find grotesque subjects for his pencil at every step, and the latter could alone do justice to their ridiculous characteristics. For want of a master mind to evolve it, what a mine of drollery remains yet undeveloped in the antediluvian appearance of the gharries patronized by the poorer class of babboos, in the Rosinantes that draw them, and in the slip-slop, devil-may-care aspect of their drivers. How laughable might be made a wordy war between

two or more natives, if witnessed by the author of "Pickwick!" God defend the nude little boys so fond of flying kites before the noses of shying hacks should they ever happen to fall under the lash of the same author! Who has not felt a want of words to express the humorous sensations created on visioning many of the old and middle-aged Hindustanee females; the former so like shrivelled parchment, the latter all belly and buttocks, yet both as seemingly vain of their personal appearance as the youngest and most unexceptionable beauty? Then the screaming hackeries drawn by ulcerated buffaloes with rope-pierced nostrils; the lung relieving intonations of palkee bearers, sweeping by (may be) with a drunken tar, whose ponderous rear, mapped with mud, looms through the parted panels like a soiled snowball; the rheumatic appearance of the bheesties, walking crab fashion under the weight of their water-swelled mussocks; the calm contempt for opinion exhibited by men whose sole occupation

seems to be to sit in the sunshine, and nip skin-tormenting pustules with their thumb nails; these, and a hundred other odd sights peculiar to Calcutta, yet await a "coming man" to place them vividly before the mind's eye.

Yes, *European* life may be worn threadbare by description; but the land of Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu has yet its comic history unwritten; and who better fitted than "*Boz*" to supply the deficiency?

A trip to India now-a-days is mere holiday work, the filling up of a parliamentary recess; but though the country may be easily reached, its climate, and the habits of its people, remain sufficiently unlike our own to give quite a new impetus to thought, and a pyramid of novel images that would set "laughter holding both his sides," might be hoped for should Mr. Dickens change the atmosphere of Grafton Square for that of the Hooghly. Men of his stamp are sadly wanting amongst us, if only to correct social foibles that seem utterly invul-

nerable to reason; Pecksniffs are numerous in Chowringhee, and more than one Sir Mulberry Hawk may be found among the frequenters of Calcutta hotels.

The City of Palaces, in addition to Her Majesty's subjects, native and European, contains a large sprinkling of French, Dutch, Germans, and Americans, but the only men who commemorate their nationality are the Scotch; these annually, on St. Andrew's Day, dine together in the Town Hall, commencing their repast at seven, and terminating it with whiskey toddy about daylight, when, if the moon should happen to be shining, they "*ken her horn*," it may be conjectured, through a rather hazy medium. None but Caledonians are admitted, a divergence from this rule in former times having led to brawls more patriotic than becoming, for the deeds of Bruce and Wallace, and the superiority of Scotia's sons generally to all other classes of the human race, are brought prominently forward in the after dinner speeches

made on these occasions; which, when a "true Briton," or a fire-eating Irishman, well primed with nectar of the gods and mountain dew, happened to hear, he was apt to construe as a libel on his country, and with a "d—n me, if I stand that!" sometimes made a lunge at the orator, who, Quaker-like, probably, in his regard for truth, took care that his assailant should *not* stand it, by stretching him his length on the floor.

That the Scotch *do* manage to take the lead, and keep it, is, however, a boast of theirs not wholly without foundation. In science, in literature, on the bench, and in the senate, proofs of this are not wanting at home; and Calcutta numbers among her most prominent and successful inhabitants, men of the same race: but this is owing to the bond of brotherhood, rather than to superior capacity. Individual steadfastness and national selfishness are the preponderating ingredients in Scottish character, which, inducing each to toil for himself, concentrate the thoughts of each on the general

hive, and all belonging to it; and thus the reputation of a Scottish author or a Scottish warrior becomes as much an object of solicitude to the nation at large, as to his own immediate kindred. Had Robert Burns been born in Kent, instead of Ayrshire, he might have bloomed for a summer, but would never have been honoured with a centenary festival; and Hogg, instead of figuring in the "Noctes Ambrosianæ," would have droned through life with ploughmen over village ale.

The St. Andrew festival of 1859 is memorable for the first public appearance in India of India's first financial minister—the Right Hon. J. Wilson; on whom the eyes of heathen millions are turned with no little anxiety, since on his tact and judgment depends their willing or unwilling adherence to a species of taxation perfectly novel to Asiatics. Mr. Wilson is a Scotchman.*

* Since this went to press, Mr. Wilson has fallen a victim to the climate of India.

I commenced this chapter with a dissertation on outsiders, and then rambled away here, there, and everywhere, like a dog at fault, but without a dog's faultlessness of intention, discursiveness being a hobby of mine. Like that canine animal when he has recovered the scent, let me return to the original track, and trot to the bottom of my page after the fashion in which I set out.

Shortly before Mr. Wilson's arrival, the "outsiders" convened a meeting at the Town Hall, to protest—*not* against being taxed themselves —*but against the iniquity of a measure which proposed to exempt their lawgivers, and all men in the service of Government, from an impost with which they were threatened.*

For Calcutta it was a monster meeting, and composed almost entirely of Europeans—not ragged, unwashed men, like those who throw up their hats for "Bright," and would sell their souls, as well as votes, for a "crisp five," but men of intelligence and substance, as fully aware

of the necessity of taxation, and as willing to pay their quota, as any of her Majesty's most loyal subjects. Will it be believed in the nineteenth century, that, maugre their speeches copied at the time and reiterated by the Indian press, and in the face of their petition to Parliament, it was deemed policy by those who influence public opinion in England, to suppress the truth, and to charge outsiders with designs only contemplated by the Governor-General and his creatures? Such is the fact, however, and it tends to illustrate the injustice and slight that men must expect, who have no legislative representative to express their views and watch over their interests.

CHAPTER XIII.

Expensiveness of Calcutta—European charges—An investment while labouring under dandyphobia—Temptation under a glass case—Difference between European and native charges—Fashionable dress—Hawkers considered and the Adventures they cause—About books and their constitutions—Extortionate prices—Caution—M'Kenzie and Lyals—Oriental warerooms—China bazaar—Bazaar bhat and bazaar libel—Chicane among boatmen—Ludicrous consequences—Jones and Brown's method of getting to windward—What they shoot and see—A Manjee's fee and a Manjee's wrath.

CALCUTTA is fast becoming one of the most expensive cities in the world, the increase of houses does not keep pace with the great influx of Europeans; indeed, house building seems to be altogether at a stand still, and nothing habitable is to be rented under £100 per annum; while the usual run of houses suited to the climate, average three and four times that sum.

Why we have no speculators in a business likely to prove so lucrative as house building, I am puzzled to say; but a company who undertook to provide for the wants of Calcuttaites in this respect, would, I feel confident, enrich themselves, and win the heartfelt thanks of the community.

Hundreds of respectable individuals, whose incomes average from two to five hundred rupees monthly, owing to this dearth of private residences, are compelled to live from year's end to year's end at hotels and boarding-houses, paying for single accommodation at the former, and in all the respectable of the latter, as much, or nearly so, as would provide for the keep of a family in England; while many of them, who would gladly tie the nuptial knot, are prevented doing so solely on account of the knotty points involved in the above particulars.

Then the charges made by European shopkeepers, for the most ordinary articles, are out of all proportion to their value, and perfectly

astound new arrivals, who, from ignorance of the language and ways of India, naturally resort to their own countrymen in preference to natives. Would you have your chin scraped, the charge is one rupee, and for cropping your curls a like coin is exacted. A couple of pills, to set in order that respected member for the commissariat department—the stomach—may probably be found desirable on the termination of a voyage, and again is a rupee evoked from the body corporate, to pay for them; indeed, a baubee and a rupee seem synonymous terms, for scarcely an article is to be got under the latter, and as far as the *ascending* scale is concerned, Miss Louisa Pyne—clever as she is in climbing the gamut—may be pronounced a mere tyro when compared with Anglo-Calcutta shopkeepers.

I remember, once upon a time (it was during a July sojourn in London), being seized with symptoms of dandyphobia; and while labouring under a paroxysm of that disease, invested

thirty shillings in a pair of ornamental patent leather Wellingtons, thinking I had done great things. But behold me in Calcutta, thoroughly cured of my complaint, and filled with a horror for superfluous clothing (preferring "nature unadorned," within the bounds of decency, before all else), lugubriously counting into the hollowed palms of a mustached Crispin, for a pair of very ordinary ankle clippers, the identical sum I had paid for my tip-toppers at home.

My English supply of neck-ties had become somewhat rusty from sea-damp, and espying a net under a glass case that I thought would suit me admirably, I wound it round my shirt-collar; but being compelled to pay the value of five shillings for the luxury, I resolved on never being caught in the Messrs. Centpercent's nets again.

The injurious effect of climate on wares, and the risk of not selling, are given as reasons for these exorbitant charges; but it strikes me that shopkeepers have principally themselves to blame

for the latter contingency; were they content with smaller profits, the risk would at any rate be very much lessened: as it is, all who value money, resort to native tradesmen immediately their habits and language become somewhat familiar to them; for though these gentry are rogues by instinct (invariably asking three times what they will consent to take, and ever trying to palm off inferior articles), a little firmness and judgment on the part of customers will enable them to avoid the Scylla (or *siller*, if they like the spelling better) without falling into Charybdis.

The difference between European and native charges, when one has thoroughly mastered Hindu arithmetic and idiosyncracy, is sometimes startling; but notwithstanding this, and the invariable lament that precedes a financial surrender by the langootied fraternity—such, for instance, as "I not one pice make by this transaction, only dead loss"—the vitality of the rascals is pleasant to witness; and the speed at

which they grow rich, under their pecuniary sacrifices, a problem worthy the study of our most profound exchequer chancellors.

To those who consider fashionable dress a *sine quâ non*, English tailors will be found indispensable; but a man addicted to antecedents, may renew his broad cloth without fear of a wry cut, though with every chance of cutting a wry figure, by simply entrusting a *cast off* for pattern, to any of the numerous dirzees on the daily look out for a job, who carry samples of stuffs in their cummerbunds, of every design and quality. In all crafts, *save* tailoring, a native may be left to the exercise of his own genius, especially in matters relating to the adornment of what Jack calls the "Figure Head." As for one's ears, there is a positive luxury in having them picked by a black fellow, whose eccentric attitudes and flexibility of wrist, as he manœuvres the slender probe, daintily held between his thumb and forefinger, among the sinuosities of the *auris internus*, are in the

highest degree artistic and suggestive of the finest touches.

The half paupers, half pedlars, who, in the vicinity of the "White Horse," Piccadilly, and a few other stage-coach halting-places, are in the habit of thrusting into carriage windows (to the great consternation of nervous females) oblong pasteboards, bristling with keen-edged penknife blades and sharp steel pens, are infants in the art of persecution, compared with the vendors who infest the principal streets of Calcutta and hang on the outskirts of the larger hotels. No sooner is a man's palanquin or gharry in motion, than his doors on either side are besieged by these gentry, whose legs seem as nimble as their tongues, and who succeed each other with such wonderful rapidity, that before the distance of half a mile has been traversed, one may be said to have run the gauntlet of all the trades. A merchant on his way to office is probably perusing some business document of absorbing interest, when right

before, and in menacing proximity to, his nose, looms a huge sola topee, or helmet, of the Roman Legion pattern; no sooner is this exorcised by an impromptu curse, and the eye—rounded by the unexpected apparition—again on the point of resuming its downcast placidity, than, Heaven shield us! a manacled green parrot, or mocking Mina bird, flutters its wings above the doomed paper, and in a tongue that may belong to Hades, makes allusions to one's female relatives totally unfitted for translation. To read on is hopeless; the document returns to the pocket of its owner, who, throwing himself back in his vehicle, is compelled to gaze in succession on such a profusion of shirt-studs, rings, spectacles, brushes, walking-sticks, pomatum pots, wax matches, and the fates know what besides, that on reaching his destination, he finds some difficulty in shaking off an idea as to whether he has not been for the last half hour participating in the hum and glitter of the Lowther Arcade.

Not the least curious of the many things hawked about the "city of palaces" are the books—the number of these, long since lost to memory, if indeed they ever had readers, and of works well known to fame, but of letter-press antiquated as Doctor Johnson's wig, is surprising. To judge by the former, all the unappreciated talent of Great Britain is bought up for the Indian market, and the latter would seem to indicate that old tomes, like consumptive constitutions, find their most congenial atmosphere in warm latitudes—the polluting miasmata of dusty shelves no longer oppresses them, and in all the brilliancy of new covers they captivate the fancy of bibliomaniacs, who, in most cases, only discover, when too late, what ravages the worm has made in their constitutions, and that the seeming soundness of their interiors is nothing more than an artificial amendment, produced by mild applications of gum and silver paper.

Select what book you may, the hawker of

course puts a stunning price upon it, but compliance with his demand—even allowing the work is one you value above all price—would be madness; he no more expects to receive it than a sailor judgment on his visual orbs, when he indulges in that commom nautical anathema, "d—n my eyes." It is simply a way of hedging the fellows have, to preserve the true price from depreciation, and one third, or a fourth of the sum demanded, may be considered an average fair profit on the sale. It is all up with the man, however, who betrays over-anxiety for possession—off will march the hawker with the most determined of backs—while an assumed indifference, and pooh, pooh! or two, accompanied by a contemptuous toss of the inspected volume to the owner if he meets your proffer with a negative, will as assuredly bring about a surrender that leaves a doubt with it as to whether, after all, too much has not been paid for the article. As most Englishmen, either on their arrival in India, or

when about to leave it, may be expected by their lady friends in the "tight little island" to send, or bring to them, sundry oriental presents, and failing to do so are liable to be stigmatised as very shabby fellows by that bauble-loving sex; a few hints as to the best means of procuring what Calcutta contains of these may not be out of place here.

At the large auctioneering establishment of McKenzie, Lyal, and Co., Japan, China, and Indian articles, are often to be found in abundance, their prices all ticketted; but the cost of warehousing, commission, &c., stands greatly in the way of men with small means but ambitious feminine acquaintances. That workbox of odorous smelling sandal wood and cunningly inlaid cover, tempts the eye of a thousand rupees per month recipient as it does the eye of a man on less than half the salary. The ladies of the twain hold themselves on a par, and are rivals for elegant *bijouterie*; but despair not, thou man of three ciphers, take a look before you

leap, and your moneyed friend, who forks out so readily, will find you have obtained as good an article for half the price *he* paid; yes, your wife or sister may still remain on speaking terms with his, and you none the poorer for the miracle. And why? Simply because in Government Place, facing the east side of the vice-regal residence, stands a musty-looking shop, with a musty wooden canopy above its door, whereon is fixed a board, bearing in musty white letters the following inscription:

ORIENTAL PRESENTS,

AND

GENERAL WARE ROOMS.

In this shop may be seen, under dusty glass cases, all, or nearly all, the aforesaid things to be found at McKenzie, Lyal, and Co.'s, equal in quality, but purchaseable at a much lower figure, which a knowledge of the native character may make lower still. Nor is this the only stronghold to which he can retreat if hard

pressed—his real Torres Vedras is the China Bazaar, within whose sheltering walls, provided his wits fail not, he may laugh defiance at the purse-proud foe, and make a weak exchequer do that which only a very powerful one can achieve elsewhere; for as the shop in Government Place is to McKenzie, Lyal, and Co.'s, so is the China Bazaar to the shop in Government Place. But as the lines of Torres Vedras owed their impregnability in a great measure to the master spirit that held them, so the China Bazaar requires a good tactitian to prevent its becoming a snare instead of a refuge to the economist. All tradesmen in that unaristocratic locality indulge in what is termed "bazaar-bhat," which may be interpreted "drawing-out," or trying the length of one's tether, and a *bonâ fide* price is on no first inquiry stated, or a purchase expected to be made without haggling, wherein lies the difficulty with novices.

In this bazaar, the interchange of libel per-

petrated by rival shopkeepers, without legal or physical danger to the libellers, is most amusing. An European, seated in his palkee, is negotiating with one of these worthies—say, for a set of chessmen—when up comes a neighbour of his in the same line of business, who, on overhearing the conversation, thrusts his head and shoulders between the two, and with the coolest effrontery launches out into abuse of all and everything pertaining to the said neighbour. "He is nothing but a d—d rascal—his chessmen are of the commonest bone—only come to *his* (the speaker's) shop, and the best ivory may be had for a mere song." The only retort, and that without any disturbance of facial muscle, will probably be, "Not believe him, sab—he great liar;" and the twain tug at the doors of the palanquin to the risk of its upset. Your bearers, in the mean time, aware of the artful dodges of these gentry, and of the extra labour it will entail upon them if successful, open a fire of words in their own behalf, till the

scene reminds one of a number of dogs snarling over the possession of a carcass, and a display of the pugilistic qualities for which Britons are renowned is sometimes requisite to restore order.

Nor is it in the bazaars alone that native chicane puzzles the inexperienced Englishman. He may possibly contemplate a river excursion, and after engaging (as he THINKS) a bolio, or cabined boat, at one of the ghauts, hies home for his traps, which shortly appear at the water-side in charge of his kitmutgar, who, having received orders from his master to stow them away on board with all despatch, does so, and then seats himself cross-legged on the poop of the vessel to smoke a "hubble bubble." Down comes the sahib, and seeing his man so pleasantly occupied, thinks all is right, of course; stepping on board, he desires the mangee (boatman), in a dignified tone, to shove off, and is just gracefully curving his spinal marrow to enable him to enter the low cabin door, when

a cool intimation from the heathen scoundrel that his price is double the sum originally agreed upon, brings it to the perpendicular again with dangerous velocity. Wrath now seizes the soul and nerves the muscles of the Englishman; he captures a boat-hook and makes frantic attempts to push the bolio into deep water, but she won't stir an inch, so he thrusts it, pike fashion, at the object of his indignation, who quietly holds on at the hooked end and laughs in his sleeve, his fellow mates looking on the while with folded arms and imperturbable countenances, motionless as their boat, which is jambed between a score of others.

Finding physical energy of no avail against the passive courage opposed to it, he resorts to swearing and expostulation—the latter in Hindostanee, most likely, unintelligible to every one but himself—till time and his voice both becoming rapidly exhausted, other things remaining in *statu quo*, he either lands his baggage again, or submits to the imposition, which

is made more galling by a considerable portion being demanded in advance.

Notwithstanding the mutinies, which have pretty well laid bare the innate depravity of Asiatic character, much false sympathy still exists for the natives of Hindostan; but neither Hindu nor Mahomedan are to be improved, in my opinion, by an over amount of freedom—the faiths of both unfit them for it, and abuse, not use of the boon, would be the sure result. In the absence of restrictive laws for such gentry as the Jehus and watermen of Calcutta, Englishmen are driven in self-defence to reciprocate their chicane, and having physical power on their side, are generally successful when they ply the natives with their own weapons: hence numerous promises made by them when hard pressed, which they decline to fulfil when the object they seek is accomplished. Not creditable this, it is true, but almost excusable: the real onus lies with the Legislative Council.

Thus exonerated to the quieting of their

consciences, Jones and Brown (men trained in the school of experience), having set their hearts upon a particular bolio, tender their earnest money with smiling countenances, and promising most liberal *after* payment, dart away without let or hindrance on the sunny Hooghly, in pursuit of snipe, wild duck, and such other game as may chance to cross their track. The plashing paddles of a dozen rowers make pleasant music as they glide along. Jones lights a cigar, and stretching himself on the cushioned seat of the cabin, gazes and dreams—Brown uncorks a bottle of Bass's beer, and drinks himself talkative.

On reaching Serampore, both patronise Bailey's hotel, who knows how to furnish a palatable tiffin. By this time the ebb tide has made, but Jones and Brown, eager for sport, must reach "Ichepore" that evening, and the manjies, between rowing and tracking against the rapidly decreasing stream, have pretty hard times of it: nevertheless, they are most obedient servants

now—too safely in the grasp of their employers to try any *legerdemain*. Crack goes Brown's rifle, and a bird falling far off, in thigh-deep mud, a manjee is despatched to bring it in; another and another flutters to earth, under the unerring shots of the monosyllabic-named Britons, till the remainder of the boatmen are floundering in all directions through the soil of their sacred river, disgusted and dirty, "faint and weak, but *patient* still." At length, Brown and Jones permit the niggers to dine, but allow them no time for digestion afterwards; the starry night discovers them toiling at their paddles, while the Englishmen sleep, rolled in their railway rugs, only to be awakened at daylight, when, rubbing their eyes, and peeping through the Venetian blinds of their cabin, they will probably see the flat, verdureless approach to Sue Saugor beside them, its shore strown with human sculls, and broken chatties, and smouldering fires, round and among which

hover kites, and vultures, and native dogs, all hungering for human flesh.

Thus from day to day; till, the excursion over, Jones and Brown again plant their feet on the Ghaut steps of Calcutta, and having engaged a ghaury, and removed their baggage, proceed to settle with the captain of the boat.

Five days, at five rupees per diem, we will suppose to have been the terms so blandly acceded to by Jones and Co., one day of which was paid in advance; but as two rupees and a half, or three rupees at most, would have been the *correct* charge daily, Jones makes his calculation accordingly, and places in the extended hand of the fresh water mariner the sum of ten rupees instead of twenty; it is now the boatman's turn to rave, which he does most frantically, but Jones gives it little or no heed; directing his coachman where to drive, he disappears in his vehicle, and the manjee is left to chew the cud of bitterness. Oh! ye most high

and sapient members of that *very supreme* council, which no Governor-General dare gainsay, fie, fie upon ye FOR PERMITTING THIS STATE OF THINGS!

CHAPTER XIV.

The Bursauty—Different feeling engendered between rain at home and rain in India—Bhesties' exemptions—Jhilmils and jingle—Bachelor philosophy—How they would act at home—Drawbacks at monsoon—Cockroach accomplishments and insanity—Ants and little children—Their propensities discussed—My unhappy coat—Lizards and the tip of a lady's finger—A homily on keyholes—Punkah wallahs' partiality for them—Musquitos, flying bugs, and grasshoppers—Calcutta, as regards men *versus* birds and insects—Treatmentof beasts of burthen—Police courts—A swell's disgust—A black bottle and Hindu swearing—The supreme court—Christianity at quarter sessions—A pæan changed into a growl.

HURRAH for the "*Bursauty*," as the large rains are termed, which, in Calcutta, set in about the middle of June, sometimes with great fury, and a cracking of Eolus's cheeks that endangers the safety of all the shipping in the Hooghly; at other times with a meek drizzle, an April-

clouded sky, and not a breath of air, but oh, how welcome either way! The lugubrious expression traceable on the countenance of an Englishman, when in fatherland he flattens his nose against a window-pane to gaze on a wet morning, is never visible on the physiog. of that individual in the east, under similar circumstances. *Tout au contraire*, for six months of the year he has been so damped in the *flesh* by an overflowing warmth of Sol's affection, that any damping of the *spirit* on that luminary withdrawing the light of his countenance, is quite out of the question; indeed, his spirits rise in exact proportion to the fall of the barometer, and a leaden sky tends to anything but a leadening of his brain. "Plash, plash, plash!" oh, how gratefully the leaves drink the moisture in! and the grass blades, late so brown and dusty, shoot up, and curve in clumps of emerald richness over all the broad "Maidan."

The "Bhesties" or road waterers, who had hitherto travelled "weary and heavy laden"

along their boats, jerking the water from their hose-mouthed mussocks over and over again with panting breath, have easy times of it now, for the "*Bursauty*" relieves them of half their labour, and claims no per centage of their profits as a reward for the service.

The "Chilmils" attached to every European house are no longer required to be closed from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, making darkness visible that we may escape being blinded with light.

> No longer do rivers of water steal
> Adown our cheeks, as down maidens' weeping;
> And a shirt on his back a man may feel,
> Without deeming his flesh with insects creeping.

Yes, the luxury of rain in Calcutta is indescribable, and the philosophic calm engendered by it has no more palpable evidence than in the placid demeanour of half-a-dozen young bachelors seated at this present time in our verandah, with their legs on its balustrade, smoking their weeds, regardless of

Buggies, bands, and ladies fair;
. But deep in anecdotic story,
Enjoying each his easy chair,
Like gentlemen whose heads are hoary.

The same young fellows, under similar circumstances, in London, would feel like caged tigers, and unless "Evans's," "Simpson's," the bowling saloon, or some of the numerous theatres were available by means of a cab, would, in all probability, find it requisite to expend their superfluous energy by kissing the housemaids, or by practising gymnastics on the dining-room table, to the great consternation of the landlady, whose privilege it might be to entertain them. But in India the *dolce far niente* becomes a passion with old and young alike; and as scratching demands a considerable amount of labour with the finger nails, and profuse perspiration requires an unceasing resort to one's pocket-handkerchief, the release from this species of hard work is a boon which those who have once experienced it know how to appreciate; and thus the rainy season is

hailed with all the glee that heralds in an English summer.

It has its drawbacks, however, in the numerous insects that, at this time, congregate from every point of the compass: cockroaches, emerging from holes and corners where they have have long lain *perdu*, exhibit their lively propensities by performing all sorts of aerial evolutions. As the quadrille manual has it, "each couple crosses his *vis-à-vis*, chains, and back again." The lancers, the gallope, and, in fact, all the dances known to us human bipeds, even to the sailor's hornpipe, seem familiar to these horny-backed and fusty-smelling scarabei; and the cool impertinence with which they will whisk across a man's nose, or make a dead lunge at his visual orbs, is only equalled by their insane partiality for chamber utensils. Should a dream-troubled mortal happen to wake in the dead of night, ten to one he will hear strange, incomprehensible noises beneath his bedstead, and when his terror has approached

fever point, and sitting up with his mouth open and head bent inquiringly forward becomes no longer endurable, he makes a desperate bound in search of a match to throw a light upon the subject: looking under his couch for a solution of the mystery, there he will see a dozen or more brown horrors securely trapped, making lively attempts to scale the enamelled walls of their prison, but hopelessly slipping backward with each endeavour. Well! Clarence died in a butt of Malmsey. *Moriantur in succinum.*

Not less tantalising, and far more destructive, are the various tribes of ants: these small fry make up in numbers for their individual significance, and if their enterprise and diligence (set forth as ensamples to little children) were followed out to the letter by that interesting class of juveniles, woful to think upon would be the sufferings of doting grandmothers and castle-building papas. That there is a *purpose* in all their undertakings may be very true, but

it would require a vast amount of genius to give a satisfactory reason for their scattering themselves over various parts of our cuticles, as they do on most unexpected occasions, and nipping with their forcèps highly sensitive localities. That they are solicitous of annihilation (the general result of their exploring propensities) can hardly be supposed.

Their invasion of our sugar basins is reasonable enough, and I can comprehend, on the principle of acquisitiveness, their partiality for various other condiments; but what on earth might they hope to gain, and where was the foresight of their leaders, when some thousands of them encamped immediately under my dress coat, that reposed in a drawer, only to be used on festive occasions? There they were, however, behind a breastwork like a railway embankment. And my *unhappy* coat, *helas!* mark me, little children—take *no* lesson from the ant though advised so to do by your grandmothers. He is a thief, a destroyer, a roving,

inquisitive vagabond, and only useful as food for lizards.

Lizards, say you? Oh, yes, *they* also abound in our domiciles, and very musical is their chirrup when they happen to be in a conversable humour. We are rather partial to them than otherwise, partly because they are graceful looking, and partly on account of their hostility to the ant and other annoying insects. They take up their quarters in all sorts of nooks and crevices, and an old acquaintance of mine has fixed his abode in the keyhole of an unused door, flanking my bed-head.

I am not given to peeping through keyholes, but a lady happening to occupy the room adjoining mine, and observing one morning a tapering object like the extremity of a finger protruding through the clavial aperture, on which glittered two sparkling globules (the settings as I imagined of a ring) I thought it just possible (for I had read in my youth the "Arabian Nights," and something of eastern

harems), that the lady might wish to make me a signal. Accordingly, I approached my lips to the keyhole with the intention of kissing the feminine protuberance, when to my consternation I discovered a lizard's head in lieu of a lady's finger, and drew back less chagrined than startled, as did the reptile. That lizard rarely leaves his lodgings before dark, and is an effectual barrier to Peeping Toms. His unmolested occupancy speaks volumes for the the individuals on either side the wall, for were we desirous of telegraphic communications, he would of course be made to decamp.

Ah, me! what mischief have not keyholes of primitive manufacture caused, or averted, according to the medium through which they were viewed? How many illicit amours and petty larcenies have been brought to light through their agency! and what groundless scandal on the other hand has resulted from the distorted glimpses (auricular, as well as

ocular) furnished by them to inquisitive flunkies and prying parlour-maids! If known to the ancients, it must have been through a keyhole that Claudia came to be suspected of unchastity, and the story of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning probably derived its origin from a like respectable source. As for us moderns, how *could* half the confidential gossip, launched from beneath the approximating bonnet edges of feminine morning visitors, ever be produced, but for the existence of keyholes? Punkah wallahs, in the highly decorous city of Calcutta, make no secret of their partiality for this species of investigation; with one hand busy at pendulation, and the other allaying scorbutic irritability, they may be seen at all hours in the attitudes of riflemen taking distant aim; nor will they appear at all disconcerted if unexpectedly approached by a wayfarer while in that very military posture. Well, well—keyholes are not insects; true, but they are the

ova of *creeping things*, whence human reptiles often derive the venom that poisons society.

Musquitos of course are every-day affairs, but they multiply during the rains, as do flying bugs, and certain small insects that may, or may *not*, be infantile grasshoppers, but which resemble the adults of that species in shape and colour, as well as in their expertness at the noble science of leapfrog. These generally reserve their sociability till the evening lamps are lit, and snowy dinner clothes glitter with plate and glass; then, in their garbs of Lincoln green, hopping, skipping, jumping, onward they come, tasting our soup, kissing our eyelids, jumping down our throats sometimes, if our mouths happen to be too widely open, and carving the adjacent atmosphere into no end of Hogarthian lines of beauty: while some of the more advanced in life, whose mental idiosyncracy (if the term is admissible) may be supposed just on the point of development, stand motionless, their little heads upturned with a

contemplative fixedness that strongly reminds one of a baby in long clothes when introduced by its nurse to a late *after* dinner party; the fixedness of gaze of both the insect and the babe being on the lamps of course. Ah, dear babe (hang the insect)!

"Though the glare of yon light may have dazzled you quite,
Though the flame of yon lamp may be gay,
There are many bright things in this world, pretty babe,
Only dazzle to lead us astray."

However little Calcutta may tally with *man's* idea of a blissful region, it is undoubtedly the paradise of birds and vermin: in no quarter of the globe are they so exempt from molestation. With beasts of burden—to wit, buffaloes and horses—however, the case is very different, and the frightful state of attenuation to which many of these are reduced by the meanness and barbarity of their owners, is not only painful to witness, but disgraceful to the framers of the local laws. I allude, as a matter of course, to animals owned by natives, whose creed with

regard to the brute creation seems to be, the largest amount of work on the least possible sustenance. With ribs almost bursting through the hides that cover them, with those hides exhibiting the most cruel sores, and with legs staggering from sheer debility, these poor creatures may daily be seen undergoing most unmerited stripes from heavy lathis, wielded by cowardly wretches, a dozen of whom would fly, like so many children, at sight of an Englishman's upraised fist: and for this brutality there is no penalty, though to bring down a thievish crow, or to menace with a rifle barrel the slender nether proportions of some strutting adjutant bird, would subject the sporting Briton to a fine in the police court.

Apropos of Calcutta police courts: they are anything but inviting to spectators. Save in the small space railed off for the use of the magistrate and his assistants, there are no seats. Policemen, and the curious in police matters, are all huddled together in a crowd outside the

bar, which (considering that crowd usually consists of half nude Bengalees, the reverse of sweet odoured, and for the most part afflicted with the itch) is rather disconcerting to the European swell who may have attestation papers to present for signature. We will suppose a trial on the *tapis* when he enters, and after edging through a seething mass of human effluvium, he reaches the rail which separates the administrator of justice from his insignificant self. A witness has just concluded his evidence, and thinking it a favourable opportunity for attracting attention, forward goes the arm of the swell with his document fluttering at the end of it; but a new witness, with a jaw-breaking name, has in the mean time been produced, and the stony gaze of the magistrate concentrates itself on a black quart bottle that is just being thrust into the heathen's tawny palm. That his nerves are out of order and require fortifying with a *peg*, will possibly be the surmise of a verdant Christian spectator:

not a bit of it—that bottle contains nothing stronger than Ganges water, by which the Hindu swears, as we do by our Bibles.

Native evidence, however, whether Hindu or Mahomedan, is hard to be relied upon; neither Ganges water nor rice have the stimulating powers of silver, in extracting the *truth*; and perjury sits as lightly on a Bengalee conscience as a cloud shadow on a mill stream, or a black eye on a professional boxer.

But your friend's extended arm—what of *that*, thou vile discursionist? He doubles it up again of course, his fingers strongly sympathising with the contraction, and ruminates on the virtue of patience under circumstances that severely test it.

The Supreme Court, or rather its session room, in regard to fittings, is much on a par with the police courts; but as Europeans take very little interest in rapes, robberies, and murders, committed by the sable community, and as the sable community—save in a few

exceptional cases—prefer bare floors to benches, and barbaric huddle to rank and file order, the "big wigs" are perhaps wise in defining Christianity at quarter sessions, a gathering together of barristers and attorneys-at-law, for whom only it is necessary to cater.

I commenced this chapter with a pæan on the Bursauty—alas for consistency!—before its completion, a summons to the outer world necessitated that I should draw on my boots, and extending one of my legs horizontally for the purpose, I discovered that admission, so easy the day before, was a feat requiring extraordinary exertion, notwithstanding my pedal adornments had seen good service, and were warranted not to *corn*. The horrid atmosphere, in fact, had infected them with its disorder and damped them, much as immersion in a tub of water would have done, besides lining their inner surfaces with a well-known green material, more appreciable in cheese than leather. Now, as the aforesaid "Bursauty" lays pollut-

ing fingers not only on boots, but on every species of wearing apparel, as well as on most other articles designated for the enjoyment of man, however carefully they may be stowed away in drawers, or shielded by wrappers, I hereby retract the fulsome praises lavished on it at the beginning of this chapter, and now declare it to be simply—what has been asserted of the income tax—a seasonable refresher after drought, but too searching in its properties.

CHAPTER XV.

All about the Ladies.

"I HAVE laughed and I've prattled with fifty fair maids,
And have kiss'd them as oft, do you see,
But of all the young maidens that dance on the green,
The maid of the mill for me."

By which exquisite poetical quotation, fair readers, I would give you to understand, not that I have ever been guilty of the naughty portion of the stanza, but simply that I intend devoting a chapter to the ladies. Most of you, I make no doubt, have, at one time or another, come in contact with mustached heroes from the capital of the late "Jehan Companee Bahadoor," or with some of their fair partners, and have listened to their glowing descriptions of Oriental

life with a feeling approaching to envy at not having shared in it. Further, you probably reside in a semi-detached villa, or a house in a row, highly respectable, of course, both of them, but rather circumscribed in space, it may be presumed; and your travelled acquaintances, while condescendingly imbibing your hyson and swallowing your toast, buttered on both sides in honour of such illustrious guests, good-naturedly remind you of the fact, by launching out into praises of the magnificent scale on which Calcutta houses are built. "Oh! they are *so* large, my dear Julia," says some affectionate female cousin or sister-in-law, from the City of Palaces; "oh, so very, very large! you can have no conception. Apsley House is anything but a stunning residence compared with them: such *splendid* vestibules, such *spacious* carriage drives! and, oh mi! saloons in which Wellington might have held his Waterloo banquets, and picketted a regiment into the bargain. Then, dear Julia, you know, we never dirty our

shoes by contact with the soil, except it may be during a short evening promenade on the 'Secretary's Walk' occasionally, or a quiet flirtation under some of the flowering trees in the 'Eden Gardens' during band hours. Carriages with us are as common as crinolines, and we rarely dispense with them, save to exhibit our equestrian proficiency. In addition to this, the gentlemen are *really* polite, and feminine Anglo-Indian life may be termed a true portraiture, on a small scale, of despotic sovereignty. As for trumpery affairs of housewifery, so provoking to gentility in the United Kingdom, *they*, thank God! are spared us. The odious marketing is done by a khansaman, and sircars pay all bills. So, you see, we have no trouble whatever, love; nothing to do, in short, but improve our minds, and exchange three-cornered chits with cherished acquaintances."

Now, my dear semi-detached young lady, or maiden, resident in a row, don't be at all dazzled by this insufferable bombast. True, the houses

are large, *very* large, some of them; but necessity has no law, and a *burning* necessity presided at their construction. Respiration or anhelation were the questions at issue, and the former carried the day. The fact is, so intensely oppressive is the heat that it would stifle us but for large and well ventilated rooms; just as, on the other hand, overlarge rooms would cause your beautiful noses and crimson lips to assume an indigo tint, more becoming to planters than to the future mothers of Mofussil (it is to be hoped) heroes. As for figuring in a carriage, what especial distinction does it confer, I should like to know, when all copying clerks, tailor's apprentices, and paun-chewing babboos do the like? The reason that your illustrious relatives prefer equomotion to soiling their shoes with heathen road-dust, is something like that which causes infants to be buckled to perambulators, and Methuselarians to risk the joltings of a Bath chair; in other words, extreme physical weakness, and even danger to

life, by trusting too confidently to their legs. To say the best of Calcutta conveyances, they are but preventive doctor's bills, and the debts incurred for remedies against disorder, *alias* carriages and horses, sometimes necessitate disclosures in the Insolvent Court that were never intended for publicity.

Again: to have no occupation, *may* be within the compass of felicity; but ninety-nine people out of a hundred will tell you, if they speak the truth, that it is the curse, not the blessing, of existence. Panting all day under punkahs, in a horizontal position, if more dignified than inspecting a larder, lacks at any rate the probable incentive to the latter—a keen appetite; and writing three-cornered chits to cherished acquaintances, in preference to looking up a husband's shirts, has more than once verified Dr. Watts's immortal lines,

> "Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do."

In regard to ladies having it all their own way,

what, I should like to know, do the following advertisements indicate? and sundry of the like have turned up within my Oriental experience:

No. 1.

"I hereby notify, that my wife, Emily Pallidface, having left my protection without a cause, I will not be responsible for any debts contracted by her."

No. 2.

"This is to make public, that I did *not* leave my husband's protection without reason, his frequent drunkenness, and the blows he dealt me when in that degraded state, having put me in terror of my life."

No, my fair friends, India (Calcutta especially) is not the paradise of women, though it may be of fools.

If they are ogled more frequently than in the mother country, it is because European petticoats are not so general as at home, and if marriages are contracted on a shorter acquaintance, we must attribute the fact to the climate, which, at the same time that it is ardent, so conduces to *ennui* and depression of spirits, that a "helpmate," even under desperate worldly

circumstances, is a thing to be desired by the male sex; but, oh, ye buoyant and blooming untravelled beauties, are these, in healthy minds, the provocatives to matrimony? Would ye wed to patch up dyspepsia? or, for the sake of a carriage, where ye dare not walk, abandon those healthful occupations that are the light and ornament of an English home? God forbid! Hie, in your quiet shawls, to the peasant's cottage; tender your modest subscription to the society for the distribution of coals and blankets; accept the truthful vows of the unpretending man of business in your own neighbourhood, if he makes such, in preference to the highflown balderdash poured out by Captain Mustache Craggyframe of the 224th Native Infantry, and you may live to die pure-hearted, single-minded, domestic hearth-cherished grandmothers in your own dear country.

Here I might appropriately wind up with the clerical admonition after a sermon, "Now to," &c., but that something remains to be said.

The world is naturally suspicious; so are dogs, especially those of King Charles's breed, for that matter. But the world, instead of tucking in its tail, and eyeing you from a respectable distance, or sidling to an acquaintanceship in the semicircular form for which King Charles's breed are remarkable, adopts too frequently the cur's tactics, and barks loudly on the strength of its suspicion, rarely waiting to see if it be well founded.

Now, it is possible that a covert sneer may be supposed to lurk under this advice of mine to the ladies, and that the simple exhibition of two sides of a picture may be contorted into a slanderous allusion to the *fair* of Hindostan (I use the word in its *literal* sense, and in no way ally myself with the ring-nosed or piebald daughters of Eve, who figuratively come under that denomination). Heaven forfend that such an imputation should attach to me for an instant. That India is not a country favourable to healthy moral development will scarcely

be disputed, but the fair who have run the gauntlet of disease and climate to cheer their expatriated countrymen, are not on that account less estimable than their sisters in the mother country. The greater the perils encountered and overcome, the greater the meed of praise: true gold is tried by the furnace. I simply portray the risks and the exaggerations, in the hope of being serviceable to some who may not have the good fortune to possess Joan of Arc's heroism and strength of mind, which, of course, all ladies at this present time in India, with very few exceptions, do possess.

Furthermore, I maintain that domestic virtue (the peculiar property of the middle classes) is of far more importance than the world seems disposed to acknowledge; and as Indian society, though made up for the most part of the middle classes, prefers aping the class immediately above it to shining in its own sphere, I blow my penny trumpet in denouncement of the practice.

The climate, it is true, necessitates, in some measure, a divergence from home rules, but not to the extent observed. The ease with which credit can be obtained, and the small criminality attached to the repudiation of a debt; vanity—where antecedents being little known, a man may give himself out for what he is not, and shine King of Trumps for a season; menial homage—remnant of the slavery of olden times; and a spice of the "lotos eater's" philosophy, viz.:—

> "Death is the end of life—ah, why
> Should life all labour be?"

have something to do with it—ay, a good deal to do with it!

The long days of unavoidable inaction experienced by ladies in Calcutta, bring pallor to the cheeks and languor to the frame, and the sex may be divided into two classes of colour—the bleached calico-skinned, and the No. 1 canvas-skinned. The latter derive their complexions, not from the sun, which they avoid as religiously

as their paler sisters, but from the blood of the nose-ringed race, who, whether mothers or mothers-in-law, never appear on the *tapis* to disturb the connubial felicity of their offspring.

The ancestral pride of a half-caste is, however, no way subdued by the consciousness of his connection with the bar sinister, and statements of the distinguished families from which his class profess to spring, afford matter highly diverting to those who set store on the duality of genealogies. Yet are half-castes more to be pitied than blamed for this, the *hauteur* with which they are treated by legitimists inducing the failing, rather than innate conceit; just as little men are more pugnacious than big ones, because they find, or fancy they find, their diminutive statures an obstruction to the privileges readily conceded to men of commanding presence.

By the way, this prattle about half-castes reminds me that emigration is, with them, the surest means of procuring the distinction they

covet. In Great Britain, articles of foreign manufacture, whatever may be their intrinsic worth, are more esteemed than home productions, and an ayah's progeny by a white father, is, in that highly speculative land, rated by matrimonial adventurers much as the cross between an Arab and an English steed is by jockeys. Even admission to Her Majesty's Drawing Rooms is more feasible with them, if they can only afford the feathers, than is the introduction of many a white lady to the Governor-General's balls, where all is pinch-beck.

I remember me, in my juvenile days, attending a ball given afloat by a gallant admiral, now no more, to a certain noble lord, the governor of a minor Indian Presidency. Great was the glare of light upon that occasion, for it flashed from eighty-four portholes, and shone in beaded lines along every yard up to the giddy royals. The black water reflected them all again, so that the ship's massive hull and

towering masts loomed topsy-turvy in lines of quivering fire, that shafted downward many a fathom below the tide-ruffled surface-water. Hundreds of boats, stretching in double rows from the pier to the ship, formed a lane for his lordship, who, as he passed between them, was greeted with cheers scarcely less deafening than the thunder which pealed from the fire-flushed muzzles of the saluting cannon. The little great man—little in more senses than one, as the sequel will show—no doubt felt inflated. Like the Roman of Macaulay's song—

> "Triumphant arches gleaming, swelled
> His breast with thoughts of boundless sway,"

and he possibly imagined nature, as well as circumstances, had placed him immeasurably above his fellow men. He mounts the ship's side, and reaches her deck under an arch of bows, clustering with leaves and luminous devices.

Welcome, Lord Lion King-at-Arms! see

what trouble has been taken on your behalf! see how ready all men are to do you homage! Nought but generous and kindly feelings can stir your soul at such a reception, and gratitude to the gallant sailor will, of course, suggest the good taste of striving to make all around you a blaze of sunshine as well as lamplight.

Ha! what is it that draws down the corners of his lordship's mouth, and brings a flush of polite shame to the brow of his amiable host? The peer's jaundiced eyes had fallen on the figures of a lady and a gentleman who were obnoxious to him.

"Sir J——," said he, turning to the admiral, "either that couple or myself must leave the ship."

Poor Sir J——! had he been opposed to a *bonâ fide* three-decker, his reply would have been, "No surrender;" but circumstances, and the situation, left him no alternative, and an aide-de-camp was despatched to break the

matter to the unsuspecting couple as delicately as possible.

And what thinkest thou, my laughter-loving Lord Palmerston, and all ye, his like healthy-souled *confrères*, was the reason which induced one of thine order so to debase it? The lady was daughter of a yeoman farmer on (I believe) the great man's estate, and for that heinous crime had been excluded from Government House, though married to a civilian who was eligible for the distinguished honour of a seat at his lordship's table. As a matter of course, he declined to visit where his wife could not, and his refusals of sundry invites—a little acrimoniously worded, perhaps—had affected his lordship's liver, whence the noble's *noble* revenge. At least, so runs the story—"I tell the tale but as 'twas told to me."

The petty jealousies, my dear lady friends, that in your native Pedlingtons so contribute to spasmodic chin jerking, and those vigorous pulsations of the fan, vulgarly termed tantrum

flutters, are not one whit abated by tropical change. Mrs. A—— abroad is as ready as Mrs. A—— at home to pick holes in Mrs. B——'s reputation, if the fascinations of the latter lady succeed in attracting more admirers than her own. And Mrs. Colonel C——, of the Queen's Royals, has no idea, save in polite parlance, of acknowledging Mrs. *Local* Colonel D—— as her equal. You may invest in the best carriage that Stewart can turn out, and own horses unrivalled for breed and bone, but think not, as an outsider's spouse, you will be more than tolerated by the spouse of a member of Council.

A Governor-General once raised a tempest in a tea-pot, because at one of his festivals he requested an aide-de-camp to point out to him the prettiest woman in the room, that he might escort her to supper. The lot fell on a subaltern's wife, and as she blushingly swept by her feminine social superiors, the masked batteries on the Peiho had not more deadly fire in reserve

than smouldered under ladies' corsets—they swelled enormously, so much so, that staylaces that evening burst in every quarter, and whalebone was strained to its utmost tension.

Ladies, I have said my say, and pause for a reply. Yet, why pause? I know your answer —it is this:

"Where those we love go, there will we go. Love, who laughs at locksmiths, is not to be baffled by a thermometer tube. It is like your impertinence to question our taste, or to suggest rules for matrimony, which, from time immemorial, has been the exclusive privilege of our sex. As for any lord, or prince either, getting the upper hand of a spirited woman, the thing is absurd! Your farmer's daughter knew as little of her sex's tactics as our boy babies do of foreign affairs, or the ship would have retained both her and the peer. She should have fainted, sir—fainted dead off—taking good care to drop into the arms of his lordship. 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;'

and, provided the simpleton was passably good-looking, the little nobleman would have melted directly, depend upon it. Pray, sir, confine yourself to your own business. You may be an authority in the money market, but can you estimate the value of a monthly nurse, or give us an idea how infants may be suckled advantageously by mothers fed upon water gruel? The just homage paid to our charms, and that warmth of demeanour for which gentlemen from India are conspicuous, may be balderdash, sir, in *your* eyes, but we beg to inform you that you are a fool, and that you may take the vow of celibacy forthwith if you think we are to be won by puritanical lectures on prudence, from men with puritanical faces and shockingly-fitting habiliments. For shame, sir! a woman's soul is not a thing to be balanced like a counting-house ledger; its takes upon trust, and soars above securities. In conclusion, we know India to be an 'El Dorado,' and we dearly love Cashmere shawls."

CHAPTER XVI.

Beginning and ending — Ochterlony monument — Burning Ghaut—The Mint—Fever Hospital, &c.—Imaum Barra—Museum—Market Place—Concluding anecdote.

"NOTHING so difficult as a beginning, except it be the end." This was the observation of a man well skilled in the art of composition. With such an authority to plead for me, I shall, perhaps, be excused for shortcomings in the preceding chapters. In them I have, doubtless, glanced at many of the Calcutta sights, but it has been after the fashion of a vagrant, who roams here, there, and everywhere without a settled purpose. Furthermore, "Murray's Calcutta Hand Book," and other publications on India, may describe all I have stated, or may

have to state, in this my unpretending volume; but as this or that individual may chance to take up my book, who has not had the advantage of perusing Murray's—just as a villager may learn of the doings of Havelock, Lord Clyde, Lawrence, &c., through the lips of an humble rank-and-file man, instead of from those heroes' legitimate biographers—I will make no excuse for offering my services as a guide in the absence of a better, but proceed at once to point out such permanent sights as Calcutta affords (and they are few enough, God knows!) with some regard to order.

First and foremost, then, let me call attention to the Ochterlony monument on the Maidan, a column in the Saracenic style of architecture, erected in honour of Colonel Ochterlony. It is a brick edifice, faced with stucco, and has two outer galleries, which are reached by spiral steps numbering 214 in all; twenty-five steps intervening between the first and second railing. No fee is payable for admission, and it is sup-

posed to be open to the public at all hours of the day. Though the monument itself is neither elegant as a work of art, nor commemorative of soul-stirring events, it is, undeniably, the best elevation whence to view the city in its entirety. Pacing its circular galleries, the spectator will see Calcutta spread around him like a map, and will obtain a better idea of how poverty elbows wealth and elegance deformity, in this capital of British India, than any amount of street perambulations would afford him. Mansions of pretension will everywhere be seen confusedly mingled with miserable mat huts, unsightly mounds, and ricketty hay sheds (like overgrown weeds in a fancy flower bed) abutting on and defacing spacious and far-stretching thoroughfares. Only in the vicinity of Government House, and round the edges of the Maidan, is Calcutta exempt from this blot on her beauty, and till it be remedied, she may with as much justice be termed a city of hovels as a city of palaces.

Another sight, and a very revolting one, is the "Burning Ghaut," situated in the neighbourhood of "Nimtollah:" to this place all defunct Hindus, whose relatives can afford to purchase firewood, are brought on stretchers for the purpose of being burnt. It is simply a square plot of ground, walled on three sides and fronted by the river; and, save when bodies are consuming, differs little from a scavenger's or dustman's repository in appearance; charred embers and mounds of cinders forming the material enclosed, squatted among which, with their hands clasping their shin bones, and their buttocks impigning on their heels, are generally to be seen two or three Dooms, waiting for a job; the seemingly contemplative individuals audienced by sundry speculative crows, as eager for a feast as the men for a holocaust.

The neighbourhood in which this Ghaut stands has a look of decay and desolation that heightens the grimness of the scene: patches of weedy and rubble-bestrown ground, alternating

with crazy-conditioned brick houses and mat huts, torn to shreds, most of which are uninhabited save by rats and prowling native dogs; the latter, lean and glassy-eyed, who lift their wedge-shaped muzzles, and sniff the dusty air on the approach of human footsteps, as though cognisant of their purpose in that uncongenial locality.

But, behold! just entering the portals of the Burning Ghaut are two half-naked men, bearing between them a stretcher covered with a white sheet: under that sheet lies, not yet stiffened, the corpse of a Hindu. A wooden pile, about two feet high, is ready to receive him, but before placing him on it, both men walk a short way into the shelving river, and dip the stretcher under water. The sheet, thus saturated, clings to the corpse like a skin, revealing its gaunt and wasted proportions in all their hideousness; but that dip was a baptism that saved a soul—an offering to Gungah, without which the defunct Hindu might have fared ill in the land of spirits.

The white sheet is now removed, and one man taking the corpse by the wrists, and the other by the ankles, he is transferred from the stretcher to the pile, with a sort of swinging jerk, such as a slaughtered pig receives when being turned from one side to the other for the purpose of scalding, previous to a scrape. Layers of wood are now placed above the body, and the mass being ignited, begins, after some hissing and spurting, to burn bravely, the licking flames and volumes of gyrating smoke making the locality anything but pleasant to lookers-on. There is no solemnity in the process, neither do the mourners betray any outward symptoms of emotion. Save that now and again a blistered human limb may be discerned bubbling among the crackling faggots, nothing would indicate a fire more important than a bivouac one, or a sacrifice of more interest than pertains to the burning of waste papers. A few ashes gathered into a bundle by some relative or friend of the deceased, and borne away as a relic after the

funeral rite is completed, alone evidences that

> "Skins may differ, but affection
> Dwells in white and black the same."

Such portions of the body as will *not* burn are made into another bundle and cast into the river to gladden the kites and fishes; and an awful nuisance they are, sticking under the paddle wheels of steamers and across the mooring chains of other vessels, to the great discomfort of the olfactories of all those who have the misfortune to be in their vicinity, and bearing no inconsiderable share in the production of India's prevalent pests, viz.—fever and cholera.

As a sanatory measure, burning is no doubt preferable to interment, but incompletely done, it leads to many a loathsome sight; by simply constructing permanent pits of an oblong shape, and grating them closely over, the faggots might be made to burn with force and certainty. For true Conservatism, however, commend me

to the Hindu; he is—slightly to alter the words of an old song—"to one thing constant *ever*;" and unless compelled by Government to improve on his present pyral system, he will go on frying his kith and kin, and torturing British noses to all eternity.

Visible from the Burning Ghaut, or rather Ghauts (for there are two of them), and facing the river, is the Mint. By applying in person at a small office attached to the left wing of the building, a pass, signed by the Mint Master, will be instantly furnished, as well as a guide. The Mint is in shape a hollow quadrangle; a grass-grown court, in the centre of which plays a fountain, forming its nucleus. Bordering this court is a columned arcade, in which stand no end of wooden-hooped barrels, filled with coin ready for transmission to the Treasury. The first set of rooms on the left, behind this arcade (or verandah, as Indians would call it), reveal the molten ore rushing into vertical tubes, which disgorge it in the shape of massive silver

or copper bars. Rooms adjoining enlighten the visitor as to the way these bars are formed into plates of the requisite thickness for the coin they are to represent; and out of these he enters others that introduce him to the punchers, who, seated on an elevated circular wall attached to the machinery, slide the plates, by hand, under piston rods or punches made to beat on hollow, sharp-edged tubes, down which the pieces of metal tumble as quickly as they are cut. From these rooms they are passed into others for the purpose of being weighed. The weighers are all Hindu lads, who sit each with a pair of tiny scales before them, and the sleight of hand with which they whisk one embryo coin into the scales, while abstracting another, is very amusing to witness—the thumb working forward, the forefinger back, with the celerity and exactitude of a steam contrivance. Leaving the little boys, we enter rooms where the coin receives its first adorning impress—to wit, the indentation round its rim; it is then ready for

Her Majesty's portrait and the reverse, which it obtains by the aid of machinery more beautifully contrived than any of the foregoing; the forceps or nippers of burnished steel, and in shape not unlike lobster's claws, that remove each piece of money as soon as it is stamped, being not the least ingenious portion of it.

From one end of the establishment to the other, precious metal lies strewed about in all conceivable shapes, and is kicked and trodden upon by passers-by with magnificent indifference. Not an atom of it is, however, lost or wasted, the sweepings again returning to the melting-pot, and all workers in the establishment undergoing a strict search before they are permitted to leave.

The Fever Hospital, with separate wards for European and native patients; the Hindu Presidency College, in the same neighbourhood; and the Governor-General's State Barge, are all sights that will repay inspection; though I can scarcely say as much for the Mahomedan Mosque,

in the vicinity of the Maidan, before entering which one has to remove his shoes—a degradation Europeans may spare themselves, and derive considerable pleasure into the bargain, by simply taking boat or rail to "Hooghly," and visiting the "*Imaum Barra*," a Moslem Temple, unsurpassed in beauty by any similar edifices between Calcutta and Agra. Its entrance from the river is by a noble flight of steps, terminating in a paved oblong court, walled on three sides by dormitories with arched doors and windows; and having in its centre a sheet of water fed by a plashing fountain. The interior walls of the Mosque are covered with Arabic inscriptions in blue, red, black, and yellow colours, which, intersecting each other in all directions, and amalgamating their hues with the various tinted lamps and chandeliers, hanging thickly clustered above aisles and nave, have a very dazzling and bewildering appearance. As an annual grant is allowed by the Indian Government for the maintenance of this building, the strict rules of

Mahomedanism are not imposed on Christian visitors; and an European, by simply uncovering his head, will meet with all due courtesy from the understrappers of the establishment. This Mosque not being in Calcutta, does not properly come under the head of Calcutta sights; it is, however, so easily available, that I make no scruple in classing it as one.

The Museum, situated at the entrance of Park Street, receives but little support, and has, consequently, neither a befitting exterior nor any great variety of contents; the curious in Hindu mythology, however, will find statues enough in its garden to gratify their curiosity—gods and goddesses in abundance, "all sitting naked in the open air," though not possessed of the graces that seemed so charming in those immortalised by the poet of the "Groves of Blarney."

The Market Place must close my catalogue of Calcutta sights; and turn not up your nose, reader, at mention of so common a spectacle.

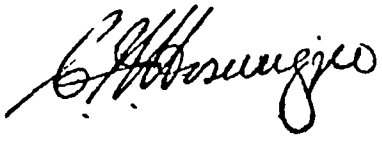
True, there are few civilized towns without market-places, more or less assimilating in construction; but the Calcutta market-place, though planned like most other public marts, differs in some respects materially from our home ones. *Imprimis*, it may be said to close when most English ones open, especially in the butcher's department, for raw meat in Calcutta will not keep wholesome many hours; and the man who would dine on prime cuttings must, either in person, or by deputy, inspect the stalls under the influence of light furnished by dollops of the animals he contemplates feasting on; in shallow pans, or cocoa-nut shells, all along the butchers' stalls, will he see these primitive illuminations, their sombre flame revealing not only legitimate joints, but serried lines of peeled kids' heads and pettitoes, and various othe small animal cuttings suited to native requirements.

The show of fruits and vegetables—native as well as European—would do credit to Covent

Garden market; coning up from shallow, circular baskets, and kept in place by light, tapering nets, they have a very tempting appearance—especially green peas in December, the month they attain perfection. But the chief feature of the Calcutta market, and the one which makes it so unlike anything English, is the crowd of dusky dealers—clothed and semi-nude—whose gesticulations and noisy altercations, while arranging their goods, would lead one to suppose chaos had come again. They are, however, soft as kittens when dealing with Europeans, and cunning as Beelzebub himself in making the "worse appear the better part," as an anecdote, with which I purpose closing my quill tattle, will, I think, clearly demonstrate. During a flower and vegetable show, that took place in the Eden Gardens, Calcutta, a native produced an enormous cabbage lettuce, so fine, firm, and solid, no doubt remained as to whom the prize was due; one of the judges

wished it dissected, and, calling for a knife, ordered the native to cut it open; he proceeded slowly, stripping off the leaves merely. The judge grew impatient, and cut it himself, when it was discovered to consist of two heads, one ingeniously inserted within the other. The gardener bolted, but the story is characteristic of the native disposition; the whole ingenuity of the Hindu being exerted to cheat and deceive.

THE END.



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